SCOTLAND YARD

By THE SAME AUTHOR

They Came to Spy

SCOTLAND YARD

THE INSIDE STORY

by

STANLEY FIRMIN

Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*
accredited to Scotland Yard

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CHAPTER I

A CUP OF TEA WITH A POISONER

SCOTLAND YARD! It would be difficult to find two simple words more grimly significant, more vitally suggestive of the world of crime and criminals, than these.

They give the cachet of reality to countless detective stories—real and fictional—read in the printed word or seen on the cinema screen. An army of clever imaginative writers through the years have used the magic of these two words to capture and hold the avid attention of countless millions of men and women for whom tales of crime and its detection have a never-dying fascination.

The myriad Scotland Yards of fiction, and the fictional officers who people them, are often strange and wonderful. Time and again must the reader of some particularly gripping crime story have wondered just what the real Scotland Yard and its clue-hunting detectives are like in actual day-to-day life.

In the pages that follow will be found the answers to these very intriguing questions. The Scotland Yard of which I am writing is no fairy-tale place, but the crime-fighting headquarters whose doors I have entered, whose rooms I have sat in, whose corridors I have walked, and whose detectives I have mingled with every single day for a score of years or more.

I am no writer of fiction. My job is that of a Fleet Street crime reporter: a gleaner of facts, and facts only, for the famous daily newspaper I represent. Facts that tell without embellishment and phantasy the throbbing daily story of London's wide-flung underworld and the men and women who dwell in it; facts that tell of a great city's law-breakers and of the men whose job of work it is to track them down and bring them to the bar of Justice.

Just that. But because the daily tale deals with human men and women, with things that actually happen, with realities and not imaginings, it has a quality of dramatic content that can be neither counterfeited nor beaten.

What will be found in these pages, then, set down, I think I may claim, for the first time, is the complete story of the Scotland Yard of today as seen from the inside, of the men who run its world's best crime-fighting machine, and of their triumphs and, in some cases, their failures.

I have set out to show just how the very human Yard detectives unravel murder and other crime mysteries, to reveal the day-to-day routine that is spiced by the flashes of intuition and brilliant deduction

that have given Scotland Yard its supreme position in the world of real-life crime detection.

To thus strip the subject of all imaginative trappings and fictional embellishments will not, I feel, mar either the interest or the pleasure of those who love to read a good fictional crime book or watch a film that has a Scotland Yard background. Rather should the true story of the Yard and how its men work enhance that interest and re-creational enjoyment. It is always intriguing to know the "how" and the "why" of things to which we are keenly attracted, to know the true inside story as well as the airy-fairy might-be.

As a start to helping you to capture something of the true atmosphere of the Yard, let me take you into the Press Room—the not over-large and rather bare room that houses day and night the crime reporters from Fleet Street.

There is nothing elaborate about it. Just a few tables strewn with latest editions of the current news sheets, half a dozen or so nondescript chairs and a number of soundproof telephone boxes, the walls of which carry the scribbled shorthand notes of scores of London crime mysteries. On the floor is a faded, much-worn carpet. It was made by prisoners in the workshops of Wormwood Scrubs.

At any hour of the day or night you will find anything up to a dozen crime reporters gathered here. Not one of them bears any resemblance to the crime reporters portrayed so vividly on the familiar Hollywood film—the tough-looking gentlemen who are always in a tremendous hurry to get somewhere else, ready to pick a quarrel with this police chief or that at the drop of a hat, demanding information from ace detectives, purloining clues from under police noses, interviewing murderers in their cells and cross-examining them to their hearts' content, and intent only on bluffing the cops and solving the mystery themselves. They never even bother to write a story, these filmic crime reporters from Hollywood, contenting themselves with 'phoning in stray bits and pieces of information to their news editors and occasionally instructing these chiefs rather forcibly to "hold the front page".

Well, whatever happens in America, that is not the way crime news is handled in London. The crime reporters assigned by their respective papers to Scotland Yard are all men highly trained and fully experienced in the getting of facts and the writing of crime stories. Their job is to cover a crime from the moment it breaks until the man who has committed it is caught and charged. They do not look a bit tough, and few of them would cut any sort of a dash in a film, crime or otherwise. And about the only thing they have in common with their American counterparts is that they all chain-smoke.

Most of them are responsible for covering any crime story which happens to break anywhere in the 700 square miles of the Metropolitan Police area. They do this twenty-four hours a day and seven days a

week. That does not mean, of course, that they are plodding away at their work every minute round the clock. A lot of time is spent in just watching and waiting. A lot more is spent in forgathering with old contacts and making new ones.

By and large, the crime reporter attached to the Yard will work a solid twelve hours a day. He will work individually, and be in keen competition with his fellows. He and they will have their own contacts in the underworld and out of it, and most of them get crime-story scoops which do not come through the ordinary police channels at all.

Until fairly recently the higher-ups at the Yard regarded the crime reporters as almost as big a nuisance as the criminals themselves. There were senior detectives who looked on the crimes they were investigating as very much their own private affair. There was, of course, always the danger of a crime reporter picking up some scrap of information before the detective got round to it. In point of fact, many important clues have been unearthed by the newspapermen, whose job it is to be enterprising and who are not tied down by the sort of regulations that have hamstrung many a police investigation.

It was Sir Harold Scott, the Yard's present Commissioner, who altered all that. When he took office he was quick to realize that the crime reporters could be very useful assets to the business of crime fighting. They could also, if they chose, be extremely awkward opponents of his or any other regime. He promptly had his Press department reorganized, and today, when any big crime occurs, frequent communiqués are issued to the reporters and they are told just what is happening by the senior detective in charge of the inquiries, being taken fully into the confidence of the Yard on the matter.

Crime stories in British newspapers may not be as colourful or as sensational as those occurring in America. But the details you do read are as full and as authentic as co-operation between the Yard and the crime reporters can make them. When a story breaks the reporters get the bare facts to start with from the Yard's Press Bureau and then hurry off to the scene of the crime in their cars to make their own investigations. There are, of course, certain things they may not do. One is the interviewing of a prisoner once that individual is in police hands. And they must not, of course, do anything that can be construed into a flagrant obstruction of the detectives in the carrying out of police inquiries.

In the pursuit of his calling a crime reporter, naturally, has many bizarre experiences. For instance, I once took tea with a woman who had a playful little habit of despatching people by handing them poisoned cups of that beverage. She had already poisoned several people before she was suspected, and it was the death of the last victim that brought me in contact with her. There was no secret about the fact that the victims had been murdered, and the theme of our talk over the tea-cups was nothing less than the identity of the slayer. I

am free to confess that I sipped my tea with a silent prayer that the day was not going to be an unlucky one for me.

Running Scotland Yard and the organization linked with it necessarily costs a lot of money. The last official figure given was that for 1943 and was more than £14,000,000, but it is no real guide to the 1948 cost, because it included such war-time charges as the upkeep of war reserve policemen and so on. Nevertheless, it is safe to hazard an estimate that running the whole crime-fighting machine today costs well over £10,000,000 a year, and over half that figure comes out of the pockets of London ratepayers, the rest being provided from Government sources.

The cost of keeping an ordinary beat patrolled for a twenty-four-hour day runs out at £1,200 a year. It costs somewhere around £11,000 a year to police Piccadilly Circus alone, and just as much is spent on keeping policemen on duty in Trafalgar Square and other key spots of less than half an acre in extent.

Scotland Yard's fleets of motor-cars eat up some £200,000 a year, and on the Yard's payroll are some 20,000 men and women whose wages cost runs up to £4,500,000 a year.

Taking the country as a whole, the yearly cost of crime to Britain is something like £28,000,000. Every crime that is committed has its scheduled cost. Thus every case of a stolen motor-car means an entry on the debit side of £100, this being the amount of money spent mainly on the circulation of police messages, the cost of the police cars sent out to seek the missing vehicle, and the cost of the time of the car crews making the search. The smallest case of housebreaking will swallow up £70 in the cost of officers' time and inquiries. An extended murder hunt or an intricate financial swindle involving long investigation will have a cost running into several thousand pounds. Convicts serving a sentence of penal servitude cost the country some £170 a year each; running all the English prisons eats up £1,500,000 a year altogether.

Incidentally, although there have never been any official figures on the point, I can reveal that every execution in Britain cost the State about £70, this including the fees and travelling expenses of the executioner and his assistant. Executioners, by the way, slept in the prison the night before they were called upon to carry out their grim duties.

The Yard has its own business manager. His official title is the Receiver, and the present holder of the office is a man of 57, Mr. F. C. Johnson, who was educated at Cambridge University and went to the Yard from the Home Office. His department is staffed by black-coated civil servants entirely and he and they are responsible for the full administration of the Yard's finances. Part of that work is the upkeep of all London police-stations and buildings.

All London police-stations, with the exception of perhaps half a

dozen erected in the last few years, conform to pattern—from the blue lamp outside its doors to the weighing-scale and measuring-machine in the charge-room and the large bare desk behind which sits the station sergeant.

He is the man who accepts or rejects the charge when a policeman or detective brings in an arrested person. If he accepts the charge the details must be entered on his charge sheet. And once a charge has been accepted and so recorded, no one, not even the highest official at the Yard, can prevent the person charged being brought before a magistrate, except in certain exceptional circumstances.

Scotland Yard officers by no means limit their activities to the crime of London Town, or even the Provinces. Requests from foreign Governments for officers to reorganize foreign police forces and detective organizations are frequent. Over sixty senior officers of the Yard were selected to reorganize police forces in territories occupied by the United Nations, and Yard detectives have been assigned to embassies and legations in many different parts of the world to ensure the safe custody of important documents. Some act as liaison officers to the Foreign Office. Many have travelled thousands of miles as bodyguards to important personages or as couriers to various Intelligence departments.

One of the closest alliances is that between the Yard and the Federal Bureau of Investigation at Washington. Officers from each have frequently been exchanged to study methods of crime detection and details of police organization. Many selected officers from the Yard have been given posts in the British Intelligence Service, and as such have kept in closest touch with American colleagues engaged in similar under-cover work.

All these things make it clear, I hope, that the story of Scotland Yard is one of many facets and wide-flung. It is, as I shall hope to show, a much deeper story than the brilliant tracking down of cunning murderers by the discovery of some unconsidered trifle, fascinating though such real-life narratives may be.

The story of Scotland Yard, in fact, is the whole story of battle against crime and criminals as it has been waged for the past hundred years or more. Even before that, for the oldest section of the Metropolitan Police is the River Police Section, whose officers patrol the thirty-six miles from Teddington Lock right down to Dagenham, in the estuary of the Thames. And that section started away back in 1798 with the formation of a marine force by the West India Company of Merchantmen for the protection of the shipping then using the Thames—a force that had its headquarters at Wapping Old Stairs, on the site of which stands the present Wapping police-station of the Thames Division of the Metropolitan Police. In those early days a vessel in the river was lucky if it could stay there for a couple of days without losing half its cargo, and the River Police went to work

to put an end to piracy and pillage from river craft and waterside premises.

These early River Police were recruited from seamen and watermen. They were originally lodged on hulks lying in the river—floating police-stations with cells in the hold for such prisoners as they took. Even these early police duties were many-sided, for the men of the river force were served out with cutlasses to protect themselves with when dealing with sheep-stealers on the Essex marshes. Down to 1885 they used rowing-boats. Today they have more than thirty fast speed-boats fitted with eighty—horse-power engines that give them a speed of fifteen knots in a chase—speed-boats that are fitted with two-way radio so that the officers are in constant contact with the Yard and can co-operate with patrol cars on shore.

That is a tale of development—and how Scotland Yard has developed through the years is what I propose to show you—from the inside.

CHAPTER II

"THE YARD"—AND THE MEN IT HOUSES

NEW SCOTLAND YARD is the correct title, and it designates a many-storeyed group of buildings set in the shadow of the Houses of Parliament at Westminster, fronting the Embankment and within a few yards of London's busy river.

It has a courtyard all right, one generally well sprinkled with parked police cars and that can be entered either from the Embankment or from nearby Whitehall. But it was not this busy space that gave the title of "The Yard" to the headquarters of London's Metropolitan Police Force.

That title, in fact, derives from a far more historic spot—a real "Scotland Yard" situated at the other end of Whitehall, only a stone's-throw from Charing Cross. Here, tucked away on the southern or river side, once stood a palace which was set aside for the accommodation of Scottish kings and their retinues visiting the English Court. And it was in an old building in the "yard" of this Scots palace that London's first definite detective department was first housed. That was in 1842, and the total strength of the department was eight men.

It was nearly sixty years ago that the Metropolitan Police, fast outgrowing its cramped accommodation near Charing Cross, was moved to its present location near Westminster Bridge. A site had fallen vacant through the failure of a project that would have given London a handsome opera house at this spot. This site was acquired and a handsome red-brick building was erected on lines that were thought to be sufficiently broad to take care of any future requirements of London's police headquarters.

That building, to become known as New Scotland Yard, was completed in 1890. For its foundations 2,500 tons of granite, quarried and cut by Dartmoor convicts, were used.

Incidentally, the detectives of that day were given a mystery right on their own doorstep to solve. Workmen digging the foundations for the new building uncovered with their shovels what clearly seemed to be the remains of a woman's body, buried at not too distant a date. Police doctors puzzled over the remains for some time, and in the end expressed the view that bones found with the remains were not those of a woman at all, but of a small bear which may have escaped from a nearby zoo.

That was the view that in the end came to be accepted, though the matter was never definitely cleared up. Thus New Scotland Yard started its life with its very own unsolved mystery.

Alas for the optimistic planning of those architects of the 'eighties!

The work done at New Scotland Yard grew to such proportions that it became evident, shortly before the last war flamed out, that extensive additions to the existing accommodation would have to be made.

The erection of a big new building adjoining the Victorian one was decided on—a building that would house the Criminal Investigation Department and its auxiliaries and give them ample elbow-room. The work of building this addition was completed during the war, despite blitzes and flying-bomb attacks. It gave the Yard a brand-new block of offices, with ten floors and 50,000 feet of floor space. It was wanted, for the eight detectives of 1842 have grown to a force of some 1,500 today, and 450 of that number are attached to the Central Office at the Yard.

As the headquarters of the whole Metropolitan Police service the Yard has much more than what the public regards as crime detection on its hands. It controls, for instance, no fewer than 20,000 regular policemen of the uniform branch.

Some idea of the complexity of the entire organization may be gathered from the following departmental structure:

Commissioner: Sir Harold Scott.

Deputy Commissioner: Mr. J. R. H. Nott-Bower.

Assistant Commissioner P. R. Margetson: In charge of "A" Department, responsible for dealing with betting, gaming, lotteries, licences, public morals, meetings and processions, movements of Royalty, riots, strikes, disorderly houses, fortune-telling, living on immoral earnings and the activities of women police.

Assistant Commissioner H. Dalton: In charge of "B" Department, dealing with accidents, traffic patrol, air navigation, street signal lights, licensing of taxi-cabs, town-planning regulations, serving of summonses and other process, lost property, and the running of a police driving school.

Assistant Commissioner Ronald Howe: In charge of "C" Department—Criminal Investigation. This department is sub-divided into:

C1—Central Office, consisting of a deputy commander, a superintendent and eight chief inspectors, each commanding a squad of specialists, including the Flying Squad.

C2—Dealing with case papers and all correspondence relating to crime and suspected crime.

C3—Dealing with finger-prints and the security of articles found on the scenes of crimes or suspected crimes, also controlling the photographic department.

C4—Criminal Record Office, which indexes dossiers, crime methods, prepares crime maps, deals with supervision of convicts on licence, makes assessments of stolen property, and runs the *Police Gazette*.

C5—Special Branch, which deals with offences against the security

Map of the 700-square-mile Metropolitan Police District, showing the divisions. Each dot represents a police-station.

of the State, naturalization of foreigners, registration of workers from Eire, and provides bodyguards for Royalty and Cabinet Ministers.

C6—The National Grand Squad.

C7—The Detective Training School, Hendon.

Assistant Commissioner A. E. Young: In charge of "D" Department, which deals with recruiting, communications, controls a wireless school, the courses of instruction for recruits and examinations for promotion, is responsible for giving flood warnings and runs the highly organized "Information Room"—which a telephone call from a householder can instantly send into action.

In addition to these broad departmental groupings there is "L" Department, which deals with all legal matters, and "S" Department, which has a civil clerical staff dealing with such matters as pay, expenses, pensions, crime and accident statistics, aliens' registration, missing persons, general police orders, Home Office circulars and the possession of firearms.

Now all this, it should be borne in mind, is the Headquarters Staff—those actually working at New Scotland Yard itself. Reaching out from that building on the Embankment are controlling lines penetrating into every part of London's 700 square miles.

That vast area is split up into four districts, each of which is under the command of a District Commander. These four districts in turn are split up into twenty-three separate police divisions, including the Thames Division, or River Police. And each division has from six to ten police-stations.

Spread out among these Divisions—the equivalent of the American precinct—are more than a thousand detectives, the number allotted to each varying with the population numbers and the degrees and types of crime mostly prevalent in the different areas. Criminal Investigation matters in each division are under the direction of a divisional detective-inspector, who has a detective-inspector as his liaison officer at each important sub-divisional station. These officers are responsible not only to an area detective-superintendent but also to the various senior officers of the uniformed branch. Incidentally, although there is co-operation between the officers of the uniformed branch and those of the Criminal Investigation Department, both sets keep very much to themselves.

In point of fact, men of the uniformed branch are very seldom, if ever, called on to take part in the investigation of a serious crime. That, as I have explained, is the function of the plain-clothes detective. Realization of this fact was, some years ago, turned to good advantage by a Scotland Yard man who was being baffled by a gang implicated in the daring theft of a very costly pearl necklace. The detective wanted, and wanted badly, evidence that would lead him to the master mind behind this theft, but shadowing of various suspected individuals, however carefully carried out, led him nowhere. In other words, the

individual shadowed was well aware of the fact and was far too wary to contact any confederate within sight of any ordinarily dressed stranger.

But the detective had noticed one very striking thing during his hours of shadowing. It was that, scared as his quarries seemed to be of passers-by in civilian dress, they exhibited no such fears at the approach of a uniformed policeman on his beat.

So the detective got himself into uniform one day, and went out on patrol. The trick worked. He was able to get near enough to the men he suspected to hear scraps of conversation which would have meant nothing at all to him had he really been a constable on the beat, but which told his acute ears all he wanted to know.

The present Commissioner has a scheme which will change a state of affairs that many think has got out of date. It is to make every uniformed man also a detective, by undergoing special courses of training in the art of spotting clues and reading their real meaning.

Detectives in the divisions usually start work at nine in the morning, and are on the job, including appearances at court, until about 2 p.m. when in the main they are free to go home—leaving, of course, a few reserves on duty. At 6 p.m. they are back on duty, and they stay on duty until the early hours of the morning. Few detectives, as a matter of routine, remain on duty all the night through.

Things are different with the headquarters staff at the Yard. There, strict office hours are kept. Men there arrive for duty at 9 a.m. and stay until six, like other Whitehall office workers. And on Saturdays they close their desks at one o'clock for the week-end. That is, in the usual run of things. There is, of course, always a skeleton staff ready to deal with emergencies, and individual detectives engaged on an important case carry on long after any limit set by office hours.

But in the main Scotland Yard is run very much like any business office. And when that office is shut—that is, after six in the evening or after one o'clock on a Saturday—the pivot of the whole organization is an inspector of the uniformed branch who is known as the Back Hall Inspector, so called because his office is in the back hall—the only entrance to the building after office hours.

During his tour of duty the Back Hall Inspector is a very important man. He is the Commissioner's direct representative, and although his rank is only that of an inspector he has almost unlimited liberty of action. Thus he has the power of being able to call out the reserves and issue instructions on behalf of the Commissioner throughout the whole 700 square miles of the London area. If, say, a bomb were found in a Whitehall office one Saturday evening, he is the man who will set in motion the entire Criminal Investigation organization.

Any high Government official or anyone else wanting to contact the Yard on important business is put through to the Back Hall Inspector. Senior officers of the outlying divisions ring him up for advice. He

has a job that calls for level-headedness and tact and the display of initiative.

In point of fact, there are four Back Hall Inspectors, each of whom takes a turn of duty on rota. It has often puzzled me why these officers, who obviously need special talents for the efficient carrying on of their highly responsible job, are not given a high rank.

London's—and, for that matter, Britain's—No. 1 Policeman is Sir Harold Scott, the Commissioner. He was a civil servant when, early in 1945, the Home Office swept tradition aside and appointed him to a job which had been filled by a long line of high-ranking Service officers before him. With few exceptions the Commissioner's chair had been given to high officers of the Army, Navy or Royal Air Force who had rendered their country valuable services in their respective spheres. And it is fair to say that these officers all contributed something to the improvement of Scotland Yard's organization.

But the appointment of a civil servant, a pure Whitehall man, to the master switch of London's crime-fighting machine was a step quite new and rather startling. For it was obvious that this Whitehall man would have the tough job of fighting London's post-war crime wave, whatever form that crime-wave might take. There were certain old-timers who shook their heads pessimistically. They sensed the era of gunmen and hold-up thugs and skilled jewel thieves that was bound to come with the end of war.

Events proved the Home Office wise in their choice of Sir Harold Scott, who already had made his name as a brilliant Whitehall organizer. Within twelve months of his appointment it was plain that Scotland Yard not merely had a leader who could quietly and most efficiently control a force of 20,000 men and a highly complicated crime-fighting machine, but a man who knew how to ask for and get the invaluable co-operation of the millions of London's citizens in the job of stamping out lawlessness as soon as it should show its ugly head.

Sir Harold was 57 when he started his new career of fighting crooks. There is nothing demonstrative about him, nothing of the hawk-eyed unraveller of dark mysteries. Quietly spoken, even austere-looking, with a lean, lined face, black hair brushed back from his forehead, and wearing horn-rimmed glasses, he is the typical "desk" man. His invariable dress is a quiet suit of plain police blue, and he wears a soft collar and tie.

As nearby Big Ben strikes nine each morning he arrives at the Yard, threading his way on foot through the gathering lines of police cars, past the front entrance and round to the Back Hall. There, all without fuss, he quietly takes the lift up to his office—a spacious, comfortable room in the "old" building, not the new—overlooking the Thames and the Embankment tramcars and motor traffic.

It can be noisy, that traffic. But the sound of it is never heard in this room, which is fitted with double windows. Sir Harold has a big

desk—but it is usually kept bare, save for a few neatly stacked notes, a desk calendar, a couple of large ash-trays and the like. Hung on the wall behind the desk of dark polished wood is a great chart, on which are shown the number and locations of crimes committed in the London area, and the number of arrests made, during the preceding twenty-four hours. Taking his seat in a roomy chair, Sir Harold's first job is to fill a roomy briar. Then he quietly gets down to the day's work in hand, methodically but with what seasoned police officers at the Yard have come to realize is a rare, quick-thinking, penetrating brain.

It was in 1911 that Scott joined the Home Office as a civil servant. He filled many administrative posts there until, in 1923, he was appointed Chairman of the Prison Commissioners, in which rôle he was responsible for many important prison reforms and schemes of re-organization. These showed his flair for organizing, and in 1939, with the shadow of war threatening, he was selected for one of the key appointments in Civil Defence—that of Chief Administrative Officer of the London Region.

In that capacity he took a big part in putting London's civil defence services on a war footing, and throughout the blitz of 1940–41 he was at the helm in their operational direction. Then, in 1942, he was made Secretary of the Ministry of Home Security, from which he was transferred to the Ministry of Aircraft Production in 1943.

That was the sum of Sir Harold Scott's career when he went to the Yard to become Britain's No. 1 Policeman. At first, tough police chiefs did not quite know what to make of him. He made no effort to dominate them by virtue of his rank. But he did want to know "how". More important, he wanted to know "why". And not only about the obvious outstanding things, but about every phase of up-to-date police work. He went out with detectives on raids, saw arrests made, then went back to the Yard, visiting the various departments without warning to see what happened next.

Then he broke all Yard precedents by giving a Press conference, and frankly told Fleet Street's crime experts and news editors that he wanted their co-operation. He revealed in confidence some of the Yard's top secrets of the moment—and was not let down. Since his arrival he has built up no new technique of crime detection. What he has done, however, is to find the way to make the utmost possible use of all the Yard experts and to vitalize with a new enthusiasm officers who had carried a routine job for years and were prepared to go on carrying it—in routine fashion and taking no chances of a false move that might jeopardize pensions.

His salary is nothing out of the way for the master of organization he has shown himself to be. He is paid £3,500 a year.

Now for some of the Yard's star personnel—the men whose job it is to go into action on actual crime-fighting—the men who are leading lights of the Criminal Investigation Department. The man at the head

of them, Assistant Commissioner Ronald Howe, has never walked a beat in his life. Today a fastidiously dressed bachelor of 47, he was educated at Westminster School, where he had the distinction of being head boy, then went on to become a classical scholar at Oxford University. In due course he became a barrister, and it was while serving in that capacity in the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions that he was suddenly made, at the age of 32, a chief constable in the Criminal Investigation Department. He learned his new job fast and well, made a trip to the United States to study American police methods, and quickly decided G–men were up against types of criminals different from those met with in Britain and that there was little to learn from the F.B.I. that would be applicable at the Yard.

But that visit to America was the first of a series to the criminal investigation departments of other lands, and Howe stored up all he learned from them. In 1946 he became head of Scotland Yard's crime fighters, and has shown himself a shrewd investigator. He is no armchair detective. When a big crime breaks he goes out to the scene, talks to the men on the job, gets the whole "atmosphere" of the case. He has an uncanny genius for crime reconstruction—his analysis of what may have happened is usually proved right when the facts have all been gathered—and back in his office he follows the hour-to-hour progress of the investigation with keenness and insight. Often, in evening dress, he will drop in of an evening from his club, listen to what line some hot investigation is taking, make a snap decision or two, give the necessary orders, and then return to his club to await the result. And nine times out of ten his snap decisions have been right. Up to the hilt.

As his deputy, Howe has one of the most brilliant investigators the Yard has known for many years. This is Commander Hugh Young, one of the few men who joined the Force as a police constable and served through every rank to the high one he now holds. He has been at the Yard for more than thirty years. Tall, slim and grey-haired, with a quiet unassuming manner and a soft voice carrying the merest trace of a Scottish accent, he looks nothing like the popular conception of a detective but rather like a fairly successful provincial business man. That quiet manner of his is, however, completely disarming—and deceptive—for behind it all is one of the cleverest brains at the Yard. Many crooks have learned that to their cost, including a couple of smart confidence men who once tried to sell him shares in a non-existent gold mine. During his Yard career he has solved many difficult murder cases.

Third man on the C.I.D. directorate is Deputy Commander W. Rawlings, whose job is mainly concerned with the co-ordination of the department, not only in matters of discipline and promotion but in the activities of Scotland Yard officers investigating crime throughout London—and, sometimes, in the provinces. American security officers on duty in London during the war years will remember Rawlings as

the man who was chief liaison officer between the Yard and the War Office.

The immediate chief of the 400-odd detectives actually at Scotland Yard is Superintendent George Hatherill, whose former job was tracking down international crooks. He is an accomplished linguist and is well known to the police chiefs of many foreign countries.

Now we come to the chief inspectors, who with their squads of picked detectives are responsible for tackling all the important cases not merely in London but in the provinces.

There is Robert Henry Fabian, 50, and a former chief of the Flying Squad. He is known as the best-dressed detective at the Yard, and as a man who never looks tired, however intricate and baffling the investigation on which he happens to be engaged. He, too, was London-born—at Ladywell.

And William Chapman, aged 48, and known as the Terrier because he has the reputation of being the Yard's most persistent detective. He has been known to solve an apparently clueless murder by six months of sheer, dogged tenacity. He was born at Sutton, in Suffolk.

Arthur George Philpott, another of the chief inspectors, is 48, and comes from Hythe, in Kent. He is an expert in long-firm frauds and cases of forgery, is seldom in the limelight, and makes a speciality of confidential inquiries for the Government.

A fourth is John Capstick, expert on jewel thieves. He was the officer who investigated the robbery of the Duke of Windsor's jewels.

There is George Arthur Somerset, aged 50, and born at Bow, in the East of London. He has gained a reputation as the "terror of the underworld".

And there is Robert Lee, aged 48, who was made chief of the Flying Squad after serving most of his time at the Yard in the Criminal Records Office. From his desk he caught many criminals by inventing ingenious new methods of filing and recording the odd little habits of old and new criminals.

One more is Wilfred Tarr. He made his name as a detective-inspector when he solved a case in which an American soldier named Hulten, with a Welsh girl named Betty Jones as decoy, led a short but hectic career as a hold-up man, shot a car-driver and dumped his body on a road on the outskirts of London. Tarr actually specializes in unravelling shady financial transactions, and was chosen to go to France and Switzerland to investigate the Max Intrator activities.

There is, too, Arthur William Davis, who is 50, was born in Kentish Town, London, and who, after specializing in the investigation of black market offences, has become deputy chief of the Criminal Records Office.

These men are Scotland Yard's chief investigators, men who not only control special squads at the Yard, but who are sent out one by one when occasion arises to solve this or that big murder case in the

provinces when the help of Scotland Yard is sought by the provincial police chief concerned.

Recently Chief Detective-Inspectors R. Stevens and Black have been added to the list of principal crime investigators at headquarters.

They can rightly be regarded as Britain's ace sleuths. Ordinary-looking men, living, most of them, in neat little houses in London's suburbs, spending their spare time tending little gardens and trying as far as they can to conceal the fact that they are anything much at the Yard, about which they will never talk to their neighbours.

What do they earn, these sleuths who on a tough murder case may be called on to work twenty hours a day? Well, they get from £9 10s. to £12 a week, according to length of service in the rank, plus allowances.

CHAPTER III

THE MEN WHO PROBE THE UNDERWORLD

NEARLY half of the 400-odd detectives who are stationed at the Central Office at Scotland Yard are men who are engaged in sedentary jobs. They work, day in and day out, in specialized departments, such as those dealing with finger-prints, photographs and records, and most of them stay in these departments for the best part of their service.

Their numbers are augmented by a constant flow of newcomers—men who are sent from various parts of London to spend six months or so at the headquarters on the Embankment to add to their general knowledge and to imbibe, at first hand, practical experience of the way the crime-fighting machine works.

So far as the Criminal Investigation Department goes, No. 1 cog in the wheel is the man who holds the job of Detective-Superintendent Central. He it is who allocates the various cases to be investigated to one or other of the team of chief inspectors, from whom the cases are handed on to the appropriate members of their squads.

These jobs will be given to a first- or second-class inspector, or to a first- or second-class sergeant—it all depends on the importance of the investigation and whatever complications might be expected to follow an arrest. If the case should be one of outstanding importance the chief inspector will take personal charge.

All reports sent in by the investigators are checked and signed by the detective-superintendent. When the investigation has been carried to its final stage the superintendent's next job is to arrange for the information gathered to be laid before the Director of Public Prosecutions. It is this official who will decide whether or not sufficient evidence has been gathered to justify bringing the case to court.

The various senior officers on the squads, as a rule, work on an assignment alone or with a sergeant as assistant. If, however, the case on hand proves to be of a specially complex character, and one needing the making of many immediate inquiries in different directions, they can ask for help, which will, of course, be at once forthcoming.

The number of officers available from Central Headquarters for the handling of cases runs to about 200, and the jobs that come their way cover all the more serious crimes of a complex nature and requiring prolonged and diligent inquiry—matters such as murder, fraud, currency offences, drug trafficking, smuggling, forgery, coining, charity frauds, black market racketeering, confidence trickery, bigamy, post-office frauds, blackmail and many other crimes. These, it should be

clearly borne in mind, are all cases outside those routine ones which are dealt with by detectives working in the various divisions.

The Flying Squad operates as a self-contained unit; so do the National Fraud Squad and the Undercover Squad. So far as women police are concerned, there is a squad of picked women detectives attached to headquarters, and officers engaged on special cases, feeling that the services of a woman detective would be of help to them, can be allocated one from a central pool.

Now let us consider the wider aspect of the Criminal Investigation Department's activities—that is, the handling of crime problems in London's far-flung 700 square miles. As I have explained, there are four separate areas, and each Criminal Investigation area is under the control of a detective-superintendent. Each of these four superintendents is an officer with long experience at Scotland Yard as a chief detective-inspector. First is Edward Greeno, aged 46, and the youngest man to be appointed to the rank of superintendent. Greeno is an expert murder investigator. He has the record of having solved seven difficult murder mysteries in a row, is said never to have lost a case, and certainly knows more crooks of the London underworld than any other of the Yard's detectives. He is in control of No. 4 district, which covers the south-east and south-west of London.

In charge of No. 2 area, or North-East and East London, is Peter Beveridge, once head of the Flying Squad, and a man who has investigated hundreds of noteworthy cases.

The superintendent in charge of No. 1 area, or West London, is Thomas Barratt, aged 48, and a native of Biggleswade. He has been in the Force since 1920.

The fourth of these superintendents is Harold Hawkyard, who has charge of area No. 3. He only recently returned to London after spending two years in Greece, where he played a leading part in the reorganization of the Greek police forces.

Working under these four superintendents are twenty-two divisional detective-inspectors, scores of detective-inspectors and nearly a thousand detectives. The divisions are lettered A to Z, the only letters not represented being O, U and I. One of the largest of all the divisions is S, which covers an area of about seventy square miles. The smallest are A, B and C Divisions, all in Central London and all covering highly congested areas. Perhaps the most important of these three is C Division, which covers most of the Soho and Piccadilly areas. The largest divisions are those farthest from Central London.

Each divisional detective-inspector is responsible not only to the divisional superintendent of the uniformed branch of the division to which he is attached, but to the detective-superintendent of the area, and the thing he is responsible for is the detection and prevention of all crime occurring within the four corners of his especial division. The cases he and the detectives under him are called on to handle range

all the way from murder to petty larceny. Whatever the crime, the divisional inspector is expected to clear it up off his own bat, without any help from headquarters at Scotland Yard except in very exceptional circumstances, though he can, of course, make the fullest possible use of all the Yard's organizational resources and its finger-print and other records.

The detective staff in each division is not a large one. During winter months it is reinforced by the addition of a number of specially selected men from the uniformed branch, who are temporarily attached for plain-clothes duty. They are mostly used as street patrols and to deal with minor offences.

In each division is an officer known as a "crime chief", who usually wears plain clothes and whose job is purely an office one. That job is to keep a day-to-day record of crime in the division. Carefully, he notes down which types of crime become prevalent, and how, when and where they happen. More, he prepares charts and graphs and keeps maps flagged so that the trend of crime, and how it is being dealt with, can be seen at a glance.

The "crime chief" was brought into being by Lord Trenchard, a former Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police. Although he is carried on the establishment of the uniformed branch, he is, more often than not, a former member of the Criminal Investigation Department. And if, studying his maps and his graphs, he comes to the conclusion that the Department needs a little timely jogging, he is the man who, through his superior administrative officers, sees that the jogging is applied.

It may not, incidentally, be generally known that every C.I.D. man, whether he be attached to a division or to headquarters, must record his every movement in a personal diary. If he goes into a public-house, even for a few minutes, while he is on duty, the fact must be entered in his little book. Similarly, a visit to this café or that, or a stroll through a street market, or a street-corner chat with a possible informant or "business" acquaintance, must all be faithfully recorded. Each week the detective will have to produce his diary to his divisional detective-inspector, who will check it and sign it. This diary-keeping is regarded as quite a serious part of the detective's daily round, and many an officer, called on to answer some unfounded allegation from the underworld, has found himself in trouble with a disciplinary board for having failed to record a meeting or a two-minutes' talk with someone he may have met casually in a place no more sinister than a café, into which he may have dropped for a cup of tea.

The detectives, indeed, lead a life of fairly strict routine. They are all required to sign on and off at their various stations, very much in the same way as though they are factory hands. They are almost uniform in the plain clothes they wear. Certainly there is that about their bearing that to the discerning eye reveals their calling at a glance. Maybe

this detective stamp springs from the fact that all the detectives of today have been required to serve at least two years in the uniformed branch before being transferred to crime investigation. And as for the matter of uniform dress, on at least two occasions chief constables of the Department have thought it fit to issue special memoranda to detectives, giving pointers on how to dress and on how to conduct themselves when called on to enter the homes of London's citizens.

One chief constable issued to the detectives under his command a carefully compiled list of "Do's and Dont's" in which he suggested the wearing of a brown suit, or in any case the wearing of a dark or unobtrusive suit, with a stiff white collar, a dark tie and a bowler hat. Many Scotland Yard officers today favour the wearing of black felt hats of "Anthony Eden" style. Altogether, with their dress and their unmistakable bearing, few could pass through London's underworld without being instantly identified for what they are.

It is, then, not altogether surprising that London's detectives, being men trained to habits of strict routine, cannot really disguise in their daily comings and goings the fact that they are police officers. It is a matter that, as will be appreciated, has distinct disadvantages sometimes in the daily, and nightly, fight against crime and criminals.

Habit is a difficult thing to shake off. I once asked a dyed-in-the-wool London crook just how it was that he was usually able to detect the proximity of a detective. "It's easy," was his reply. "They just don't know how to stop giving themselves away. You just watch one when he enters a public-house some time. You'll see what I mean at once.

"You'll find he won't do as you or I would do—go right up to the counter and order his drink, without any beating about the bush. What he'll do is to make rather slowly for the counter, and even while he's giving his order you'll find his eyes roaming about, sizing up—probably without realizing what he's doing—the faces and appearances of any other customers who happen to be near by.

"Then, when his drink has been brought and placed on the counter before him, his eyes will be wandering farther afield, until they are sizing up every single soul in the bar. He can't help doing it, and it always gives him away—gives the boys the unintended tip to be careful about what they are saying and doing.

"Those detectives—they can't help going on like that even when they are off duty, even when they may have just dropped in for a quiet glass with their wives. They just can't stop being detectives, every hour of the twenty-four, and they can't stop letting the world realize what their job is."

I am afraid that's all too true. The investigators of a generation ago did not, I think, advertise their calling so widely. In their well-worn suits, shabby mackintoshes, and bowler hats they moved quietly about in the underworld, making their own contacts and keeping them, and often solving crimes by brilliant deduction and the use of methods

that today would be regarded as distinctly unorthodox among the detective rank and file.

Those methods were stopped rather abruptly as a result of two or three sensational affairs some twenty years ago which put Scotland Yard in a rather unpleasant spot-light of publicity. One of these cases showed all too clearly that certain officers with West End duties had fallen into the reprehensible habit of taking bribes from members or near-members of the underworld, and the immediate result of all the outcry that followed was the ushering in of an era of strict discipline, one effect of which was to prevent Scotland Yard detectives from establishing intimate contacts from among the criminal fraternity. In so many words, they were forbidden from mixing with known criminals and undesirables of any description, even from association with bookmakers. It was then, indeed, that they were forbidden even to enter a public-house without recording the fact in the official diaries with which they were provided. This, necessarily, shut off a good deal of information from detectives faced with the job of probing this or that crime. It certainly hampered the quick gathering of knowledge of the activities of London's regular crooks.

That sort of knowledge is vital in crime investigation. Most senior officers, I am sure, will agree with me when I say that a detective is as good as his information, which means that, whatever parts brilliant deduction and uncanny intuition may play in the game of crook-catching and mystery-solving, the most valuable aid a detective can have is timely, pointed information from the underworld.

Now, it was inevitable that one result of the tightening-up regulations of twenty years ago should be the losing of touch with the underworld by Scotland Yard detectives. This was sharply realized when the post-war crime wave hit London in 1946, and towards the end of that year steps were taken to counter the situation by the formation of what became known as a "Ghost Squad"—a group of men specially selected because of their unobtrusive appearance and manner—a handful of men who, in other words, had somehow not allowed routine and regimentation to set their looks and their habits in the customary detective mould.

This handful of officers was relieved of all other routine duties, given liberal expense allowances and sent out into the underworld on the express mission of making and keeping contacts. The scheme has proved highly successful, but it is open to question whether it yet achieves as much, or can achieve as much, as the old system when every single Scotland Yard man was his own undercover agent, with a dozen long-known and well-tested informants as his own special string to call on should the occasion offer.

The divisions into which London's vast crime-fighting machine is organized worked, until fairly recently, each under its divisional detective-inspector, more or less on the lines of watertight compart-

ments. That was probably necessary when the size of the whole organization is borne in mind. Yet I cannot help thinking a good many criminals may have escaped the police net purely because of that fact. I know of at least one case—which I will deal with in detail later in these pages—where a man committed no fewer than four murders in a week and would probably have escaped the police net entirely but for the alertness of two London newspapermen. His crimes were all committed in Central London. But they were committed in three different Central London divisions, each of which worked on its own watertight-compartment lines. The result of that was that clues and possible clues turned up in one division remained unlinked with those unearthed in the others. The only individual to benefit from that was the hidden murderer.

It was Scott, Howe and Young, the top team of three at the Yard, who, applying modern methods in a fast-moving world, swept away that watertight-compartment tradition—at any rate so far as the handling of big crime riddles is concerned. They decided that in such cases as a baffling murder or a spectacular jewel robbery the whole of the Yard's machine should swing as quickly as possible into action, and not just merely one section of it.

That, however, still happens only in the most important cases. Today, unless a crime seizes the imagination of the public and gets a big show in the newspapers, or is one of such importance that questions begin to be asked in Parliament about the progress of police investigations, the only person liable to get really worried and concerned is the divisional detective-inspector in whose area it has taken place.

He is the man who will have the "baby to hold". And the "baby" may be a murder. Now, the inspector may be a perfectly good officer on general lines, alert, keen and with a first-class record, but he may be a man with little actual experience of a murder investigation, although he may know all about the routine that investigation should take. And although he may know all about regulations and laid-down procedure, he may lack the flair and intuition that often solves mysteries.

Nevertheless, unless something exceptional happens, he will be the man who will have to carry the investigations through, though the advice of his divisional superintendent will, of course, always be available to him. If the murder is one according to pattern the chances are that it will be solved all right. If, however, the crime proves to be one of those with unusual angles and difficulties, the divisional detective's lack of the ability and flair possessed by the Yard murder chiefs proper may well result in the addition of another unsolved murder mystery to the records.

Now and then, when the chiefs at the Yard come to the conclusion that a particular divisional detective-inspector is not quite up to solving a murder case on his hands, a chief inspector might be sent along from headquarters to take the matter in hand. This, however, is by no means a normal step, and, in point of fact, is but rarely taken. These chief

inspectors are normally reserved for the making of investigations in the provinces. After all, most of the divisional detective-inspectors are efficient men in the general run of things. The only point I wish to make is that a murder investigation in a division is not necessarily always undertaken by the best detectives available.

The divisional detective-inspector can, of course, call on the services of the finger-print department, the photographic department and of any or all of the Yard's scientific experts to help him unravel a mystery, though he will be the main investigator and the detective responsible for bringing the criminal to justice. In such a murder investigation he and his detectives will probably be working eighteen hours a day. And from beginning to end the detectives of neighbouring divisions will remain completely uninterested in what is going on. It will be none of their business and they will not seek to make it so. Those neighbouring divisional detective-inspectors will just carry on with their normal work, and the only thought they will give to the murder next door will doubtless be a little secret satisfaction that it did not happen on their own ground.

I have mentioned how, in 1946, the "Ghost Squad" came to be formed, and why. This squad, consisting of not more than a dozen men, was quite the most novel thing Scotland Yard had known in its long history. And it was to prove its worth, over and over again, in a mere matter of months.

The men forming the squad were, as I have explained, relieved of all ordinary detective duties and given a completely free hand to establish contact with any members of the underworld they could. A tricky and dangerous business, that. Each man chosen for the squad was, of course, hand-picked. He was selected not merely for his experience in spotting good contacts and making and keeping them, but for the fact that, in the normal run of things, he carried no "label" as a detective and possessed sufficient histrionic ability to assume, and carry off, whatever role he might have a mind to adopt. It goes without saying, too, that each was a man of cold nerve and quick wits, able to stand on his own feet and meet any situation without relying on the fact that he had the Yard at his back.

Each of these men was going to operate on the lines of the traditional detective of fiction. He was allowed funds that would enable him to move in any walk of life. He could use any car he wished—an old shabby model or, if it should suit his book, a glistening luxury Rolls-Royce. He was given a large wardrobe containing sets of clothing that would enable him to move about London in any guise he might fancy.

This handful of men walked out of the Yard and, one by one, disappeared into the busy streams of London life. In an incredibly short time word began to be received from them—messages over the 'phone, in code that preserved their real identities and whereabouts.

All they were expected to do was to 'phone in tips of what was happening in the underworld. Little whispers of who had pulled off this adroit jewel robbery which was giving some divisional detective-inspector a headache, who was the fence in that smash-and-grab raid, the fur-coat theft that was being planned for next week, and things like that.

The giving of tips was all the men of the "Ghost Squad" were expected to do. Once the information was at the Yard it was up to the regular detectives of the Criminal Investigation Department to do the rest. These men of the "Ghost Squad" never made any arrests, and never appeared in court to give evidence against the men they had played so important a part in unmasking. They remained in the background, unidentified and unidentifiable—so far as crookdom was concerned.

The results were more satisfactory than ever had been anticipated. Within a few months their work had led to the recovery of thousands of pounds' worth of stolen property, and the tips they had given the Yard brought about the arrests of dozens of expert thieves, gunmen, receivers and gangsters of all kinds.

These "ghost" men have been so successful in hiding their identities that not long ago two were actually picked up by uniformed constables and marched into a local police-station for questioning as suspicious characters.

Today their numbers include members of the women police. All of them have burrowed deeply into the underworld and are living lives that provide Scotland Yard with a blue-print of the London crime set-up more complete in detail than anything ever before attempted.

Another innovation made in 1946 was the formation of a National Fraud Squad, set up, for the first time in British police history, with authority to operate anywhere in England and Wales. This Squad, which is under the direction of Detective-Superintendent A. Thorp, a handsome bachelor, consists of about twenty men, specially selected from the City of London Criminal Investigation Department and Scotland Yard personnel for their wide experience in tackling big frauds.

In addition to that experience, the men of this Squad have received special training under expert accountants, to equip them for the job of unravelling frauds which may run into tens of thousands of pounds, and which involve book-keeping jugglery of the most complicated character.

This Squad is ready to go into action in any part of the country where financial crooks may be suspected of operating. That has been made possible only by a special arrangement between the Home Office and the chiefs of provincial police forces. So far as the City of London goes—and the City has its own police force, quite outside the ambit of Scotland Yard—this supersedes the age-old custom which left the onus of investigation on the victims of financial crooks. What has happened hitherto is that victims suspecting they have been swindled, on com-

plaining to the City Police, have been advised to consult their solicitors and have had the necessity of securing evidence of the fraud at their own expense. Only when this evidence has been laid before the City Police, and duly considered, has a police prosecution been launched. That has now all been changed by the formation of this National Fraud Squad, which is empowered to take up any case its superintendent feels calls for investigation.

Such investigations are nearly always long-term affairs. One case I know of, which the Squad has on hand at time of writing will take at least eighteen months of solid probing before the necessary report can be made to the Director of Public Prosecutions. But that report, when it is made, will be complete and detailed.

In addition to its fraud-probing activities the Squad also undertakes special inquiries of various kinds for the Bank of England.

CHAPTER IV

THE FINGER-PRINT BUREAU

STANDING in a British court one day, giving evidence before judge and jury, an officer from Scotland Yard's finger-print department was being asked questions about the famed infallibility of the system, when, rather startlingly, he quoted this passage from the Scriptures:

"He sealeth up the hand of every man, that all men know His work." It comes from the thirtieth verse of the second Book of Job, and was apposite for the making of the officer's point.

Scotland Yard's finger-print bureau has rightly been described as the "backbone of the Criminal Investigation Department". It has, in point of fact, been responsible for the detection of more murderers and other criminals than any other factor in the whole complicated science of crime detection.

The Yard can take credit for pioneering the finger-print systems of identification that today are used by police forces throughout the world.

It all began with the discovery by William Herschel, in 1858, that each human being possessed individual markings on each of his finger-tips, that no two people possessed exactly the same markings, and that these markings remained unchanged right from the cradle to the grave.

Many years later, Sir Francis Galton, who founded the science of eugenics, embarked on a study of finger-prints with a view to determining their bearing on the question of heredity and anthropology. Following Herschel's lead, he convinced himself of the permanence of finger-prints throughout the individual's lifetime, and when, in 1897, a British Home Office committee was called into being to investigate methods of identification of criminals—notably the Bertillon system—he placed before the members some rather revolutionary views on the use that was waiting to be made of the patterns of loops and whorls each human being carried—patterns which could never be counterfeited or altered.

The only snag standing in the way of its adoption was the difficulty of satisfactorily classifying the various types of finger-prints. This snag, however, was surmounted in 1898 by Sir Edward Henry, who was then serving as Inspector General of Police in Bengal. He devised a method of classification that was entirely workable, and this was placed before another Home Office committee in 1900 and, after long consideration, adopted the following year. Not much was done with the system for a year or two. But in 1903 Henry became Commissioner

of the Metropolitan Police, and two years later Scotland Yard's first finger-print department was broadened into a central bureau, records and advice from which were available to every police force in Britain.

Today more than a million sets of classified finger-prints are filed at Scotland Yard, and nearly a quarter of a million identifications are made every year. Head of the department is Superintendent Frederick Cherrill. Thirty years ago, when a young constable in uniform, he volunteered for transfer to the department. He has now become one of the greatest authorities on finger-prints in the world.

A remarkable man is Frederick Cherrill. In appearance he is just like a prosperous farmer, and is rarely seen without a bowler hat on his head. But this quietly spoken, unobtrusive man has probably sent more murderers to the scaffold and more criminals to prison cells than any other man in the whole history of Scotland Yard.

Nearly every British judge and front-rank lawyer knows his portly grey-haired figure, and whenever he enters the witness-box his evidence is listened to with rapt interest. Whether the case, or whatever work he is on, be big or small, it is all the same to Cherrill, who goes back home to his suburban house on Mitcham Common to forget crime in a couple of hours spent at his hobby, which is woodwork. Most of the furniture in his home he has made himself, and he is a woodcarver of exceptional artistic ability.

A good deal of the thirty years Cherrill has spent with finger-prints has been devoted to improving the methods of discovering and recording them, and also to improving the ordinary routine of employing them when so recorded. Thus the Superintendent is the co-inventor—with Detective-Inspector P. Law, of the Yard's photographic department—of a new system of photographing faint prints on mirrors which have been badly scratched, or on steel plates. This is done by using special lighting and a camera fitted with prismatic mirrors. Again, with a "magic eye" lens he has found it possible to photograph prints which are invisible to the human eye. Yet again, by using his prismatic mirrors and a special concentration of light rays he can get a clearly defined finger-print from a coloured label—something quite new in the science of finger-prints. He has even essayed the taking of finger-prints of monkeys in the London Zoo with a view to establishing whether or not there was any similarity with the finger-prints of humans. In point of fact, one chimpanzee in that zoo was found to possess finger-prints which tallied, in a surprising number of details, with those of a young criminal of degenerate type.

In court Cherrill is the "perfect witness". In his slow, confident voice he will recite the details of this finger-print or that and say, clearly and without drama, just why it must have been made by the man he says made it. Perhaps the greatest tributes to his wizardry have been paid by defence lawyers, who have often complained that, when he has given identifying evidence based on finger-prints, it has been impossible

Scotland Yard—seen from the Embankment

In the Information Room

to find any finger-print expert able to challenge or shake him on his testimony.

He is scrupulously fair, and has an eye that misses nothing connected with his beloved science. Because of this he was once responsible for the stopping of a murder trial which was in full swing at the Old Bailey. He was giving evidence in a case where an airman, named Cummings, was charged with the murder of a woman in the West End. In fact Cummings had murdered no fewer than four women in all, but, in accordance with the traditions of British justice, this grim truth was something of which few individuals in the court had any inkling. Cummings was charged with only the one murder. Had he been found not guilty of that particular killing he would, of course, have been placed on trial for one of the others. Every care is taken in a British court to avoid anything which in the slightest degree can be construed into prejudicing an accused man's case.

It was the meticulous carrying out of that unalterable code that impelled Cherrill to take a step that stopped Cummings' trial. He was giving evidence on a finger-print that had been found at the scene of the murder—a finger-print, he declared, that could only have been made by the accused man. In his hand he held a photographic enlargement of the print in question, and was explaining to the members of the jury, who had been provided with a similar photographic enlargement, the exact points on which his certainty was based.

Now, the members of the jury were seated some yards away from where Cherrill stood in the witness-box. His sharp eyes, however, noticed that the photograph they were examining, although an enlargement of a finger-print made by Cummings with the same finger, was still not the one about which he was talking. It was, indeed, a print which Cummings had left behind on the scene of one of his other murders.

Cherrill promptly called the attention of the judge to the point. The judge, just as promptly, stopped the trial and discharged the jury. A new one was empanelled, and the trial was started all over again from the very beginning.

There was another occasion when two young lawyers, engaged in a murder trial, had an ingenious idea by which they hoped to persuade the jury that the finger-print system of identification was by no means infallible. Against their client, a finger-print was produced that had been taken from the curved handle of a knife. Their plan was to demonstrate that, because the print was on a curved surface, the charted distance between loops and whorls must be inaccurate, and they had painstakingly worked out a complex mathematical table to prove their point.

Now, neither Cherrill nor any of his Scotland Yard officers will produce a finger-print as identification evidence unless it has sixteen distinct similarities with the print taken for comparison from the man accused. On this occasion Cherrill carefully enumerated his sixteen

similarities, and was then cross-examined on them by one of the mathematically minded lawyers. Holding up a large photograph of the print in question, the man of law took the expert, one by one, through the whole sixteen similarities, dramatically pointing out how the distances between each line varied as between the knife-handle impression and an identical print obtained in the ordinary way on a flat surface.

Cherrill listened to it all very patiently. Then, with one quiet, unemotional sentence, he completely demolished the point the young lawyer had taken such pains and so much of the Court's time to build up. "We don't check finger-prints that way," was Cherrill's simple but direct observation. His meaning, of course, was that the elaborate measurements had no point, because it was on other technical similarities that the Yard's evidence was based, and it was incontestable.

Cherill sees far more in a finger-print than a mere record of identity. From it he can, in a manner which cannot fail to strike the layman as utterly uncanny, actually classify its owner's intellectual status. As a test of this astonishing ability, he has been shown the finger-prints of six candidates about to sit in an examination, and has set down a forecast of the order in which they will finish. The actual result of the examination has been found to bear out the forecast with an amazing degree of accuracy. Cherill bases knowledge of that kind on the individual arrangement of the arches, loops, whorls and composite marks which form the basis of all finger-print readings.

The layman would find a walk through the Yard's finger-print department a rather prosaic affair, with little or no thrill. He would see merely long lines of filing cabinets, stacks of charts carrying prints, a few ordinary-looking enlarging cameras and a number of studious-looking men seated at desks. But filed away in those cabinets are the million or more sets of finger-prints with a fascinating story behind each individual set.

Everyone of those million sets consists of ten finger-prints of each individual. In addition is a collection of single prints—the prints of a single finger of the best-known criminals. This makes a search of the whole million sets unnecessary each time a known criminal turns up, making for speed in the search. Then there is a collection of finger-prints found on the scenes of recent and not-so-recent crimes. These are mostly single prints, and they are being kept until the criminal does another job and is caught. A fourth, smaller but vastly interesting, collection is that of palm-prints. The science of taking palm-prints has made great strides in recent years. What really started it was a discovery made during the Lindbergh Baby kidnapping case investigations in the United States some years ago.

During those investigations United States finger-print experts endeavoured, using the ordinary powder-dusting method, to obtain finger-prints from a rough-surfaced piece of leather which had been used by the kidnapper. They had no success whatever. Dr. E. M.

Hudson, of New York, however, trying his hand on the problem, found scores. He had discovered a new method of taking finger-prints—one in which iodine gas was employed. This brought to light not only finger-prints on small hard surfaces, but on a piece of soft cloth and even on the surface of human skin. Thus finger-prints made on the neck of a person who had been manually strangled could be revealed by this method.

Linked with this discovery was the further one that palm-prints had a definite value in matters of identification. Scotland Yard experts went on to make their own research into the possibilities of the new discoveries, and today there are cases in the record which make it clear that, even if he leaves no finger-prints, a criminal can still be tracked down because he was careless enough to leave a print of his palm, or even only part of his palm, on something or other connected with his crime.

There are one or two unusual exhibits in this finger-print department at the Yard which the visitor would find of interest. The most striking, perhaps, is a jar of spirit containing the tip of a man's little finger. That preserved finger-tip once led to the identification of a badly wanted burglar. In his activities that criminal had made a point of seeing he left no finger-prints around whenever he was on a job. One night, however, he had a bit of bad luck. He was climbing out of a window with his swag, when, endeavouring to surmount a row of iron railings which flanked the window, he slipped and fell. A ring he was wearing on his little finger caught on one of the spikes of the railings and, with his whole weight on it, the top of that little finger was wrenched off.

The man got away all right, but not for long. The Yard's experts found the impaled finger-tip, of course, and carefully recorded its loops and whorls. A check-up in the filing cabinets showed plainly enough to whom it belonged, and he was soon caught and sent to a prison cell.

The possibility of a man's being able to destroy his living finger-prints has often been debated. Research and records at the Yard have established that there is really no chance of this being achieved. Some time ago a burglar, whose carelessness in the matter of finger-prints had led him many times to prison, decided at last to change his methods and wear gloves when on the job. The change paid him dividends for a time—but for a time only. For one night, while in a house he was burgling, he decided, after he had gathered together his loot, that he might as well wash his hands. So off he went to the bathroom, stripped off his gloves, filled a basin with water and got on with his ablutions. Then he packed up his kit and left.

He was not a very adroit fellow. It never occurred to him that he should have turned on that hot-water tap before he stripped off his gloves and not after. As it was, the tap he had handled carried a perfect set of prints of the fingers of his right hand, and in due

course along came a Scotland Yard man and photographed them. Back to prison went our burglar, and this time for quite a spell.

He spent a lot of time thinking about finger-prints while he was serving his sentence, and when he again stepped to freedom it was with the resolve firmly made that never, never again would finger-prints trap him. He had thought it all out, and was convinced he had found a way to outwit the Yard's men once and for all.

His method was terribly painful, and to follow it must have strained his resolve to the uttermost. For what he did was to burn off the tell-tale ridges on each of his finger-tips with acid. That done, he disdained the use of gloves and went on with his burglaries. Now and again blurred marks were found at burgled homes, but he was very careful how he disposed of his loot and the police never got any real evidence that he was at work.

He had a run for ten whole years like this. And then, one day, a Yard finger-print man, busy on the scene of a rather big robbery, came across a set of finger-prints that was pretty well perfectly made. Back at the Yard, they were quickly matched up with those of the man who had provided no fresh prints for so long. The man, much to his surprise, was promptly arrested, and was indignant when he learned there was finger-print evidence against him. What he had not realized was that, slowly but surely, the ridges and loops and whorls so carefully eaten by acid from his finger-tips had grown again, and had grown exactly in the pattern they had originally followed. A special check of each finger-tip after his arrest produced prints that were absolutely identical with those taken ten years earlier.

Also in the Yard's records is the case of a man who was so determined to commit suicide that he first took poison, then immediately cut his wrists, and then plunged straight into a bath he had already filled with water, so that he might drown if the other two methods should miscarry. All this happened at a West End hotel where he had arrived that very evening. He had registered in a false name, cut every identifying tab from his clothing, destroyed every identifying paper, and was so intent on keeping his identity a secret after death that he had taken the precaution of treating his finger-tips with a chemical that had burnt off all the papillary ridges.

But Scotland Yard men soon solved the riddle of who this mystery man was. His finger-tips were skinned, and the skin was photographed the wrong way round. These photographs showed the bases of the papillary ridges from the *inside* of the skin, and, checked with the records, showed that the mystery suicide was a man thrice convicted for fraud.

The Yard has established that finger-prints can be forged. It has also satisfied itself that they cannot be forged satisfactorily. There was the case of one crook who had what he considered a brainy idea of framing an enemy. He obtained the finger-prints of his victim and then, by an elaborate process, transferred these prints to the sides of

a cash-box which had been robbed. In due course the cash-box was taken to the Yard, the prints were photographed and a routine check through the records started. It was soon stopped, for it was not long before the detectives spotted that the prints were the wrong way round. In due course the real cash-box thief was unmasked.

There have been one or two cases where crooks have tried to break the Yard's system by using forged prints "planted" with the use of a gelatine mould. But the quick discovery by the Yard's experts of the absence of pore marks on the faked prints established them for what they were. No artificial device has yet been found to reproduce pore marks.

There are finger-print experts on duty at the Yard every one of the twenty-four hours every day, ready to go off at once to the scene of any London crime, but the main business of the day starts at 7 a.m. Awaiting the first arrivals among the staff are batches of requests for finger-print checks received overnight from police forces all over Britain. Work on these is started at eight o'clock, and within two or three hours answers to all of them have been telegraphed.

The Yard sends its finger-print experts all over the country to give evidence. A detective-inspector once made a journey of 200 miles to a provincial town to testify in a case in which only fourpence was involved. Yet, to prepare that evidence, the staff had had to search through the files and examine some 300 prints before finding the one required.

Until fairly recently the transmission of finger-prints from the Yard's records to police forces abroad was done by means of code figures sent by wireless. In 1946 a photograph of a perfect finger-print was, for the first time, transmitted from London to Melbourne by wireless beam. The transmission took no longer than seven minutes, and within a couple of hours the Melbourne police were wirelessing back their reply, after having searched their own records. That reply contained the information necessary for the identification, beyond all question, of a badly wanted Australian who was operating in London.

At the Derby race at Epsom in 1947 the Finger-print Department organized, for the first time, a despatch-rider service for the swift checking up on suspects arrested on the course. The scheme was organized to help a special session of the Epsom magistrates, who held a court after the meeting had closed. What happened was that the arrested suspects had their finger-prints taken in a van working in a nearby field. The prints were rushed back to the Yard by despatch rider, and, if the men had criminal records, the information was rushed back to Epsom by motor-cyclist in time for it to be available to the Court.

From time to time discussion has arisen in Britain on the advisability of following the practice of other countries in making it compulsory for every inhabitant to have his or her finger-prints taken and recorded—

not exclusively for reasons of crime detection but to simplify all investigations where identification is the key point. There can be no doubt that universal finger-printing would have great advantages. To most Britons, however, the idea is utterly repugnant. Even serving police officers have refused to have their prints taken and recorded, although it is laid down in police regulations that, if a chief constable orders the men in his force to have their finger-prints taken, they have no option but to agree. The argument advanced for the observance of this regulation is that when a finger-print expert visits the scene of a crime he will not be misled by the prints of police officers left on door-handles and the like.

Whatever their reason, it is a fact that most people do hate having their finger-prints taken. It may be because finger-prints are generally associated with criminals and police records. Nevertheless, Queen Mary and other members of the Royal Family had theirs taken when they paid a visit to Scotland Yard. These prints joined a little collection of famous prints carefully framed and preserved as mementoes. Among them is a card bearing the prints of the Duke of Windsor, taken some years ago during a similar visit.

Left to itself, a finger-print made on an article can remain intact and therefore available to the experts for some considerable time. Not long ago a revolver was taken from the bed of the River Thames, to which it had been consigned by a criminal anxious to dispose of what he knew would be damaging evidence if the police found him still in possession of it.

Now, that revolver had been in the water for more than a week. But the Yard experts were able to find on it a finger-print that was perfect. A reproduction of that print enabled other Yard men to track down the crook who had owned the weapon, and to place him in the dock and secure his conviction.

There is one finger-print problem the Yard's experts have yet to solve—one they mean to solve. That is the devising of some method that will tell them not just who made a certain finger-print but just when he made it.

I know, in my own experience, of at least one murderer who was able to escape the consequences of his crime because it was not possible for this important point of "when" to be established.

In this case the man was confronted with his finger-prints, which had been found on an article in a room where a woman had been done to death. He readily admitted the prints were his. Indeed, he said he would have been surprised to learn that his prints were not found in that room of death. For he had visited the unfortunate woman, and stayed there some time. That visit, however, had been the day before the murder was committed.

What the Yard men had to do, of course, was to prove that the man had visited the murdered woman not merely the day before her death

In the Statistics Department. A machine sorting 24,000 cards an hour

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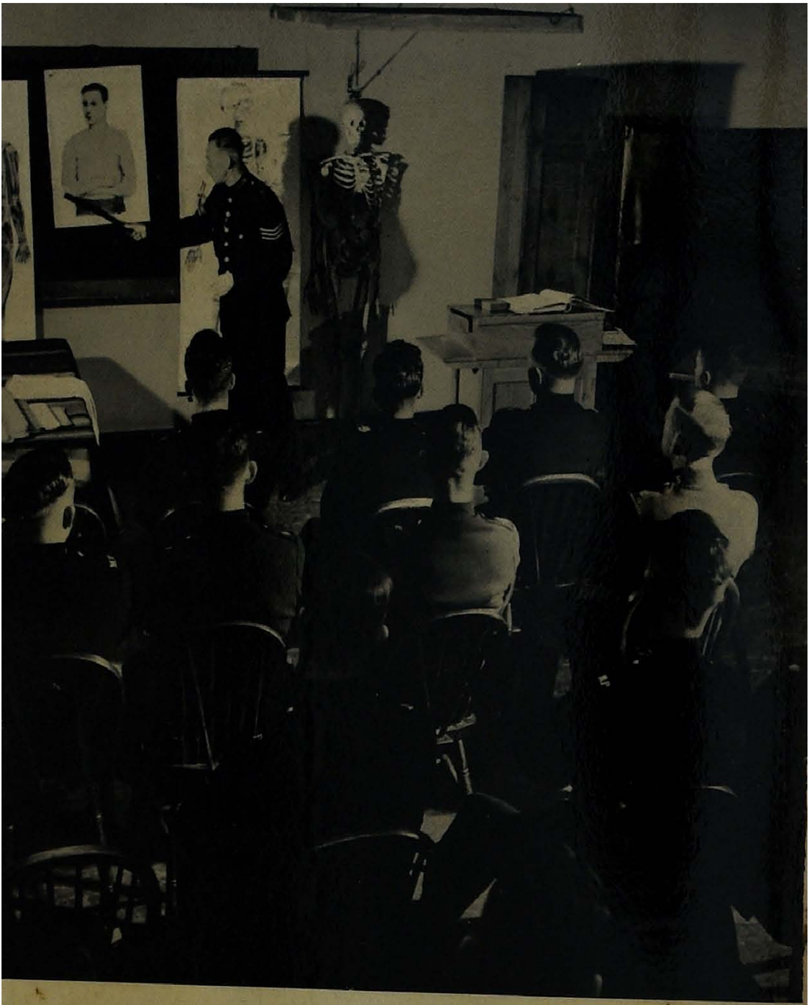


A class at the Police College

but at the time of her death. This they were not able to do, and although they had the man's finger-prints, found actually on the scene of the crime, they were quite unable to shake his story that they were in no way connected with the crime.

The finger-prints were, therefore, quite valueless, and the man who had made them could not be prevented from going his way.

Perpetually, search goes on at Scotland Yard for new methods of perfecting and expanding the present finger-printing system. One reason is that British judges and magistrates and juries have, on a number of occasions, declined to convict on uncorroborated finger-print evidence. In most cases it is introduced as additional evidence, and, in many cases, becomes the deciding factor if other available testimony leaves a slight doubt.

But, even as it stands, the Yard's finger-print department is frankly given ace ranking by the police forces of the world. Which is as it should be, for, after all, Scotland Yard was where it all started.

CHAPTER V

THE FLYING SQUAD

ONE morning at the end of 1918 two canvas-hooded motor tenders, not at all unlike the vehicles Flying Corps personnel had been using in the war that had just ended, were driven quietly through the gates of Scotland Yard and threaded their way through parked cars of various kinds to the first clear space their drivers could find.

The tenders had not long to wait. Before very long nearly a dozen detectives were climbing into the vehicles. Then, when they were all aboard, the tenders went through the gates and joined the stream of traffic on the Embankment.

Their drivers knew just where to go—an unexciting street in a London suburb. The moment they reached it the detectives sprang out and, without loss of a moment, surrounded a certain quiet-looking house, to which entry was promptly gained from both the back and the front.

Almost before the neighbours realized that unusual things were happening, two men and a woman were being marched out and given seats in one of the tenders. The other was quickly loaded with goods of various kinds which probing officers found stored in the rooms of the house—stolen goods. Within an hour the tenders were on their way back to Scotland Yard with prisoners and property. And Scotland Yard's famous Flying Squad had been born.

Today the men of that Flying Squad represent the shock troops of the Criminal Investigation Department. To the underworld of London they are known as "the heavy mob". They are empowered to carry out operations in any part of the Metropolitan area, and have been given an almost free hand so far as methods are concerned.

The exact strength of the Flying Squad is a closely guarded secret. What can be said, however, is that the force is a comparatively small one, especially when it is borne in mind that it gives a twenty-four-hours' service each and every day.

The men of the Squad are tough. They have to be, for these are the men who fight London's gangs. They are, therefore, specially selected both for their physique and general fitness and for their experience in dealing with gangsters. Like other detectives of the Department, they go about their work unarmed. That is, they do not carry revolvers or guns of any kind. Tucked away in each Squad car, however, you would find a truncheon or two—just in case they should run up against any specially savage customers.

Each Squad car has a crew consisting of a detective-inspector or sergeant, a driver, an observer and a wireless operator. The latter

uses Morse-type wireless and sends out messages on circuits different from those used by the three other mobile sections of the Yard—the area wireless patrols, which are fitted with two-way wireless talkies, the "Q" cars, which operate under camouflage, and the traffic patrols.

The Squad was an unqualified success right from the start, and by 1920 it was strengthened by the addition of two cars, each of 14 h.p., which was the last word in high-speed cars in those days. Two years later the cars were equipped with wireless, and they toured the London streets each with a member of its crew wearing earphones and on the alert for the first wireless messages to be sent out from the Yard—messages which would send the cars dashing off on some exciting and perhaps dangerous adventure.

The top speed of these two original cars was probably not much above forty miles an hour, and, as time went on and motor-cars became more general, it was not unusual for crooks in stolen cars to evade pursuit by outdistancing the Squad vehicles merely by virtue of their superior speed. That is not the case today. The Squad is now equipped with cars fitted with specially made engines and bodies and capable of doing more than 100 miles an hour without the slightest difficulty.

In the late 'thirties the cars used were, in the main, an ordinary well-known make, and it was inevitable that they should become just as easily identifiable by London crooks as by the uniformed police patrols. To counter this the make of car used was periodically changed. This move, however, did not prevent the Squad being completely outsmarted on one occasion by an expert London jewel thief.

A wave of jewel robberies had started. Many of them were carried out during the night hours, but, despite a careful watch by foot police and officers patrolling in cars, the thief remained a mystery man. As the robberies grew in number and frequency the Flying Squad's vigilance was intensified, and men of the uniformed branch were put on the job of keeping a careful check of all cars they came across.

It was a chance remark by one of these uniformed men that furnished the first clue to what was happening. There was a big jewel robbery in his area, and he casually mentioned the interesting fact that shortly before it must have occurred a Flying Squad car had been in the neighbourhood. A check-up was made, and no record could be found of any Squad car having been in the district at the time mentioned. Further inquiries, however, brought to light other men who were confident that a Squad car had passed them.

The point was pursued in other localities where there had been jewel robberies, and it was established that, shortly before or shortly after each robbery, in every case, a Flying Squad car had been noticed in the vicinity. The uniformed policemen who had seen and recognized it had had no qualms about letting it pass. To their expert eyes it was so clearly what it seemed to be—a genuine Flying Squad vehicle.

It was all too plain what was happening. The jewel thief had, some-

how or other, managed to get hold of a Squad car and was using it for his robberies. And how he had managed it was a riddle, for the Squad had every one of its cars all right—not one had been stolen or "borrowed".

Two days later the answer to the puzzle was furnished. Driving quietly along Piccadilly, a Squad crew spotted another Squad car being driven towards them. It was, however, carrying only one man, and as the cars passed each other the detectives recognized him at a glance. He was a man with a long record of jewel thefts.

So they turned and followed him, and were soon giving him the signal that they would like a word with him. He made no bones about it, but promptly pulled into the kerb and came to a stop. As the officers drew abreast he greeted them with great politeness and smilingly asked what they required of him.

Now, the detectives hadn't a shred of evidence that this man had carried out any of the recent jewel robberies, and there were not, therefore, any questions they could ask him on that score. What they did want to know, however, was how he came to be driving a Flying Squad car. He gave them a straightforward answer, quite coolly and without any beating about the bush. "It was perfectly simple," he said. "Several of the Squad cars were recently put up for sale at public auction, and I just went along and bought one."

It was true. The story was fully investigated, and the Yard realized there was nothing much they could do about it—save, of course, try to keep a sharpened eye on this particular old hand. Well, they did that and were rewarded in a few days by the discovery that he had got rid of the ex-Squad car—to a buyer whose honest use of it was beyond question.

Getting rid of that Squad car, however, was to have a sequel for that jewel thief. It was only three weeks later that, hamstrung without it, he was caught while out on one of his raids, and in due course away he went to penal servitude.

The men who drive the Squad cars are among the most expert drivers in Britain—perhaps in the world. Selected in the first place for their exceptional physique, their iron nerves and general aptitude for driving, they are sent to the Metropolitan Police driving school at Hendon for training. And they leave that school ready to tackle anything in the way of dare-devil roadwork. Some of them have also received special training on the famous Brooklands motor-racing track. Here, where most of the world's famous motorists have raced, they have risked their necks learning how to ram fast-moving cars with a minimum risk of danger to themselves and their crew, and also to the men they may be pursuing. On heavily greased tracks they have learned with just what degree of safety a car can be rammed under those conditions.

Although the Squad cars are capable of great speeds, it is their

specially designed engines, which give them enormous powers of acceleration, that make them so valuable in the catching and intercepting of crooks hoping to make a smooth getaway by car. The technique of a Squad car-driver is something to marvel at. His great aim is to carry out the risky job of chasing crooks at high speed through London's busy streets without, so far as is humanly possible, endangering the lives of peaceful members of the community. In point of fact, very few members of the public indeed have been injured as a result of Flying Squad chases. These have been hit not by Squad cars but by those of the chased bandits.

The skill of the Squad drivers, of course, is largely responsible for this "safety" record. But another reason is that the drivers know every foot of London's streets and roads, every turn, every *cul-de-sac*, every stretch of "straight" and its condition from the driving point of view. Also, they know the exact spot where they can go into action with the minimum of risk. They may, and often do, catch up with a fleeing car very quickly and be content to remain on its tail for many miles until they reach the spot where they know they can ram it with little risk to other people or drive it up into some *cul-de-sac*.

As to the speed with which the Squad cars work—well, on more than one occasion, an all-night express, speeding at anything between seventy and a hundred miles an hour, has been beaten to its destination. Only recently a Squad driver, taking his crew to intercept some thieves operating in the country, successfully raced the Southern express into Southampton.

The men whom the Flying Squad detectives are out to catch are, of course, often quite expert drivers too, knowing most of the Squad drivers' tricks as well as a few of their own. Some of the expert smash-and-grab drivers spend weeks in a gangster car practising just how to avoid another car trying desperately to ram it. One such driver knew that a favourite Squad trick was to catch a fleeing bandit car under the wings with the Squad car's bumpers, and, to counter that particular stroke, he went to the length of having special steel bumpers fitted to surround his car wings entirely before going out on the job on hand. It was an ingenious move, but it did not save him.

There is, of course, nothing haphazard about the work of professional smash-and-grab bandits. Every move has been carefully thought out and they go into action on a carefully prepared time-table which is rigidly adhered to. For the actual raid the custom is to use a stolen car, and the quick ease with which these stolen cars are handled has often puzzled the layman. But there's nothing very mysterious about it once you know the crooks' method.

This method usually is to spend weeks familiarizing themselves with some definite make of car, so that, when the moment for action comes, there will be no uncertainty or strangeness. Then, shortly before zero hour for the actual raid, the crook driver will select a car of similar make,

snap it up from where it is parked, which will be not very far from the shop or store to be raided. The fact that the car may be locked won't worry him at all. He will have with him keys, specially cut by crook mechanics, which will enable him to overcome speedily a little matter of that sort.

He will then take the wheel, just as the real owner might do, and drive off unhesitatingly. Within the minute he will have picked up, at some prearranged rendezvous, the other members of the gang. Next stop will be the spot chosen for the actual raid, and, in a matter of seconds, that will be all over. The raiders, with their loot, will then be speeding to a spot not far away where, in some quiet street, one of their own cars is waiting—a car properly registered and of a kind not likely to attract undue attention. To transfer, with the proceeds of the raid, will be but the work of seconds. The stolen car will now be abandoned, if possible in a spot where it will not be found or noticed too quickly; for this stolen car, used in the actual raid, will be the one of which the police by now will have the number and description, and that number and description will be in process of being flashed by wireless to scores of police cars in all parts of London. Until it is discovered abandoned it will be the only car the police will be hunting. Therefore, the longer it remains undiscovered, the better for the bandits.

In their own properly registered car they, at this time, will be on their way through the streets of London to their hideout. They can afford to take a little time about that, but not too much, for, remember, they have aboard the stolen property. At their rendezvous, however, there will be hands ready to receive it. And so thoroughly planned will have been the arrangements that, if all has gone according to plan, that loot, if it be jewellery, will all be in process of being broken up well within an hour or, at most, an hour and a half of the actual raid having taken place.

Quick-witted lads, these smash-and-grab raiders. Once or twice they have pulled off a smart trick designed to lessen the broadcasting of a quick hue and cry for the stolen raid car; in other words, to give them more time for their actual get-away. They have arranged with a confederate, properly registered as the owner of a car, to drive his vehicle to a prearranged spot, leave it and walk away. The moment he has passed out of sight round the nearest corner a bandit driver has stepped in, taken the wheel, and driven off to pick up his gang for a raid.

The owner, meanwhile, would be taking a little walk, and watching the time closely. And, about the time he knew, by the time-table, the raid had been completed and the gang should be abandoning the raid car and entering their own, he would stroll quietly into a police-station and report that his car had been stolen. He would be ready with its proper description and out would go the messages that would put every policeman and detective in London on the *qui vive*. But by that time,

of course, the police would be following a "cold" line and looking for a car that had already been abandoned, instead of the one that now really held the bandits.

One expert smash-and-grab gang had a very different technique from this, however. They specialized in using their own car. That meant a lot of work for them, but they found it well worth while. After each job the car would be whisked away to a secret garage and, in an hour or two, would be an entirely different car, newly painted and carrying different number plates. That method was killed after the war when new gangs were formed for the sole purpose of stealing, camouflaging and reselling cars.

The smash-and-grab raiders, who came into their heyday with the advent of the popular car, gave the Flying Squad some of their most thrilling adventures. These gangs did manage to get away with hundreds of thousands of pounds' worth of loot from jewellery shops and the like, but, without the vigilance and activities of the Flying Squad the total would probably have run into millions. The raids that were successful owed that success to the sheer daring with which they were undertaken and the element of surprise with which they were accompanied.

The gangs who adopted this form of crime were, in the main, composed of desperate young criminals, quite hardened despite their youth. They would, sometimes, spend whole weeks reconnoitring the jewellery shop they had planned to raid. The first job was to size up the value of the goods on display in the windows, and, sometimes, the receiver to whom the stuff would pass after the raid would go along as well and point out the specially valuable articles he would like to handle. The next step would be to examine the window to find out what added protections against theft there might be. The step after that would be to ascertain the exact type and thickness of the window glass. So thorough was one of the gangs on this last point that they formed a habit of making special tests with sheets of glass in the garden of the home of one of their number with the idea of determining just what weight was required to break it.

It was, by the way, just this thoroughness in preparation that led to the capture of this particular gang. It came to the ears of a local policeman one day that there were rather strange goings-on in a certain garden on his beat. Men had been observed to carry in sheets of plate glass, which were then propped up one by one in the garden. Then, while his companions stood round and watched, one of their number would throw, first, a brick at the glass square. Then, at another piece of glass, a tyre lever would be hurled. At a third the missile would be a bar of iron. At the end of this strange performance the shattered pieces of glass would be shovelled up into a corner and the men would depart. This odd proceeding had been observed on a number of different occasions, and the neighbour who had mentioned it to the passing policeman thought it would bear investigation.

So did the divisional detective-inspector to whom the policeman's report in due course came. Watch was kept, and when the next spot of glass-smashing was found to coincide with a West End raid on a jewellery shop, the detectives pounced. The whole gang was sent to penal servitude.

To get back to the work of the average gang: every single detail would be worked out with precision, including the exact state of traffic at certain hours on streets on the lines of the planned get-away. Then, when the last detail had been charted, and not before, the gang would go into action. A car would drive up to the kerb one morning or afternoon, a man with a brick or a tyre lever or a jemmy wrapped in brown paper would stroll across to the jeweller's window, there would be a not-too-noisy crash, and, before passers-by had the chance to raise any alarm, a second man would have thrust his hands through the hole in the glass, scooped up whatever pieces of jewellery had been marked down, and the two would be back in the car and away like a bullet from a gun.

That was the smash-and-grab raid proper. It is not so frequently practised now because most jewellers have found it useful to have steel electrified grids fitted over the outsides of their windows. And even that precaution did not always save them. One gang of ingenuity coolly drove up to a jeweller's shop so fitted one day, took a chain fitted with a large hook at each end, and, in workmanlike fashion, fitted one hook to the back of their car and the other hook to the centre of the protecting grille. Then they started up their car. As the steel grille was wrenched away one member of the gang made it but a second's work to smash the window in the old way. And, in another moment or two, the car was speeding on its way with a rich haul.

Before the war the detectives of the Flying Squad knew most of the ordinary workaday professional crooks—the pickpockets, bag-snatchers, station thieves specializing in stealing baggage and suit-cases, car thieves, housebreakers, burglars, shopbreakers and warehouse thieves. These were the rank and file of London crookdom, none of them big-time operators. These were the men—and women—who had one line of roguery and stuck to it pretty rigidly. They would carry out a number of jobs, remain undetected for a little while, spend their ill-gotten gains on this or that fortuitous amusement, get caught and sent to prison, serve their term usually with resignation, return to the world of free men and start the whole thing all over again.

They all conformed to pattern, and were all properly recorded at the Yard, so that the detectives not only knew their personalities but also their individual methods of working. Some worked in gangs, like the shopbreakers, the warehouse thieves, the pickpockets and the smash-and-grab raiders. And the Squad officers knew pretty well the set-up of the various teams, as they were called, where they operated from and nearly everything about them. And this knowledge enabled the Yard to

keep things under control and prevent anything like a big crime-wave from breaking.

It was with the end of the late war that the Squad was faced with a new problem—the young gangsters, some of them of teen age, some young and desperate deserters from the Services, who armed themselves with the guns the really professional crooks would never dream of carrying, much less using, and went abroad with but one thought in their crazy young minds—that of making easy money somehow, anyhow.

The Yard's problem with this new type of wrongdoer was that few of them were actually known to the police and there were no records, therefore, that would provide a clue to the identities of the authors of this or that piece of outlawry. New gangs were formed, with unknown women and men acting as receivers for rich hauls of furs and other goods. It will, however, only be a matter of time before they all get patterned and recorded in the Yard's Rogues' Gallery.

Already most of these new-style gangs have been broken up. One of the most dangerous had a membership of five young fellows whose leader was a red-haired, pale-faced, dope-ridden young thug who, during the war years, was found unfit for service with the Army. He was a tough who controlled his gang by pure terror methods. In a holster under his coat he carried two pistols which he was never without, and any incipient arguments in his gang were always cut short by threats to shoot, which his henchmen had no doubt he would carry out without a second thought.

This desperado and his gang raided West End stores and got away with thousands of pounds worth of furs. They carried out other robberies, and twice within a week were spotted and pursued when returning from this sort of expedition. The leader countered pursuit by using his revolvers in true Chicago fashion, and got away with it. This sort of thing, however, put the Squad on its mettle, and a Flying Squad car was given the job of tracking the band down—one squad car only, bear in mind. It went out under Detective-Inspector Judge, and it did the work that had been given to it in less than a week.

They found the house which the gang had made its headquarters and three unarmed detectives forced their way in. Doors that were found locked were smashed down, but the detectives found the house empty. In one room, however, was a heap of furs worth £10,000—the loot from a recent robbery.

The detectives sat down to wait. And presently one of the gang came home. He was promptly arrested, and down at the local police-station, once he knew he was safe from his two-gun leader, he began to talk. What he said took the officers next to a house in the King's Cross district. They found a room which was an armoury of shotguns, revolvers, knives, knuckledusters and thousands of rounds of ammunition. But no gangsters were on the premises.

Then the detectives, still unarmed, moved on to a club in the West End which, they had learned, the young leader frequented. He was there all right, and the officers parked their car round the corner out of sight and began to wait for him to leave. Here were unarmed detectives about to arrest a desperado who had already fired six shots at policemen on various occasions and who, it was known, would not hesitate a moment to pull his guns and make every effort to shoot his way out of a police trap. But it really only wanted a little planning. King pin of that planning was the planting of a detective-sergeant from the squad car's crew a yard from the club's narrow doorway. And that sergeant was a former boxer.

They waited hours, but at last the red-haired desperado stepped from the club's door. And he had not taken two steps before the sergeant's expertly-swung fist laid him down and out. It was, after all, no good taking chances with a lad of this sort.

Yet that expert blow was a little wasted. For, when the wanted man was searched, he had no guns on him at all. That was, in fact, the first night for a year that he had ventured forth without his precious pair of holstered weapons.

It was typical of this type of thug that he complained bitterly that the sergeant had hit him—a man with a weak heart. He played that weak-heart plea at his trial, and it saved him from a flogging with the cat-o'-nine-tails. But it did not save him from the sentence of a long term of penal servitude he received.

CHAPTER VI

STORIES FROM THE FLYING SQUAD'S CASE BOOK

CRUISING more or less idly down the Strand one day, the team of a Flying Squad car came to sudden attention when their hawk-eyed observer allowed an ejaculation of surprise to escape his lips.

What had caused it was the sight of five men leaving a restaurant together. Nothing much in that, perhaps. But these five men were all, as it chanced, members of a certain well-known gang of jewel thieves. And this was the very first time on record that the observer, or anyone else for that matter, had ever seen them in public together.

A quick word to the driver and the Squad car slid to the kerb, well to the rear of the five men, but not so far away as to give them a chance to escape observation. The five men did not seem to have any very sinister matters on their minds—but then, who could tell? The Yard men watched while the quintette moved in a very ordinary-looking little group along the Strand pavement.

They came to a halt at a bus stop. When, within a minute or two, an Eastward-bound bus came along, on they all got, every man jack of the five, climbing the stairs stolidly to the upper deck, and, as the bus moved off, the Squad car came to life and followed in its wake.

Along Fleet Street, up Ludgate Hill went the bus, making its customary stops for the disembarkation of passengers. The officers in the Squad car had no difficulty at all in making sure none of the five men were among them. But at the stop at the top of the Hill the five men did bring their ride to an end. One by one they got off, crossed the road and, to the utter astonishment of the watching detectives, climbed the broad steps of St. Paul's Cathedral and passed through the doors to the cloistral calm within.

The detectives did not allow their astonishment to paralyse them. In a matter of seconds they, too, were climbing the steps of the Cathedral and doffing hats to enter. There they were, all in a line on their knees, heads bowed. Five well-dressed devout men. The Yard men did not hesitate. Into the sixth row of cane-seated chairs behind the five kneeling men filed four rather grim-faced detectives, to sit with bowed heads that did not preclude them from keeping fixed watch on the figures in front.

Those five suspects would not have been up to their jobs had they failed to realize the presence of the detectives. It was only a question of how long they stayed there, kneeling in pseudo prayer. And presently it became clear they had come to a whispered decision. For as one man

they rose, left their row of seats and, each clutching his hat, filed down the aisle. As they passed the seated detectives they could not forbear to grin a little sheepishly at the men of law and order.

They well knew, of course, what would happen. The detectives were on their heels as they stepped out into the open air and down the broad steps, and a minute or two later they were being shepherded into the Squad car, under arrest as suspected persons. The detectives then learned just what had sent them into the Cathedral. The five men, alert and eagle-eyed, had spotted the detectives, back there in the Strand, just as soon as the detectives had spotted them—that is, as they stepped out of the restaurant—and had decided to find out for certain whether or not they themselves had been spotted. The decision to enter the Cathedral was an adroit one, and the fact that the detectives followed them in left them in no doubt at all as to the answer to their query.

A second case that may serve as light relief to more serious Flying Squad adventures concerned another team of five crooks—in this case five pickpockets—three men and two women. They had boarded a bus and, on the top deck, took seats and settled down for a chance to go into action. And I might here explain that bus pickpockets work as a rule to a well-defined formula. A prospective victim will be chosen, two of the gang, to all intents and purposes strangers to each other, will take the seats behind him, a third will watch his opportunity and occupy the outside seat next to him, and the remaining members will be close at hand, one of them to receive the loot and leave the bus with it as soon as possible.

At the appointed moment, one of those sitting behind the victim will engage his attention for a moment—a picked-up letter apparently found beneath the seat, a request for a light for a cigarette, a request as to the whereabouts of some building—any one of a number of excuses suggest themselves. As the victim turns in his seat the expert sitting beside him will do his stuff, extracting the victim's wallet or other possessions from jacket or waistcoat pocket in the twinkling of an eye and so adroitly and smoothly that not the faintest suspicion will be aroused. A second later the loot will have been passed on to the confederate whose job it will be to get away with it, off the bus.

Well, the team of five I have mentioned had chosen their victim and their seats, and were all poised to get to work. And then one of them chanced to notice the bus seemed to have left its normal route. He whispered the fact to a confederate, and an intuitive sense of threatening danger impelled the five to call off operations and get off that bus as fast as possible.

But they were too late. Even while they were descending the stairs the bus swerved and turned straight into a police-station yard, and as the five, one by one, stepped down, a smiling detective welcomed each. What had happened was that a Flying Squad man had spotted the

five as they had boarded the bus, and had quietly swung himself aboard. He had, all unsuspected, been watching their every move, and, when he was satisfied as to what was afoot, had had a word with the driver, revealed his identity and explained just what he wanted the driver to do. No arrests could have been planned more neatly.

Processions and similar big outdoor public functions afford many golden opportunities for the smaller fry among London's crooks. They may be petty criminals, but their activities give the Squad men quite a busy time now and again.

There was a period a few years ago when the Yard began to get an unusual number of complaints from people who had lost very valuable tiepins. The complaints were all on the same line—the pin had vanished while its owner had been watching some procession or public ceremony, and the number of complaints made it all too clear that accidental loss could be ruled out. Incidentally, every loser laughed at the idea that their pins could have been stolen from them—they were confident on that point.

The job of unravelling this little mystery was given to the Flying Squad, and it was the detectives of a Squad team who eventually spotted two old lags leaving a thickish part of a crowd that had been watching a certain public ceremony. They were taken away and searched, and in their pockets, sure enough, were a round half-dozen quite valuable tie-pins. Back into the crowd went one of the detectives, calling for anyone who had lost a tie-pin. Three astonished men eventually came forward—astonished because they had found their possessions missing, more astonished still at being shown them by the detective.

How had it been done? The two old lags were quite frank about it. They had a trick method of their own which it had taken them many months of assiduous practice to perfect. The method consisted of taking up a position, one on each side of a prospective victim, but a few feet from him, each holding an end of a thin piece of twine, with a small loop in the middle of it. Playing this twine and watching their opportunity, they would skilfully flick the loop over the tiepin and quietly jerk it free, the tie-pin being safely in one of their pockets in a matter of seconds and without the victim being any whit the wiser.

In the ordinary sense of the term Flying Squad detectives rarely adopt disguise for their work. They are, however, quick to improvise when it becomes a really important matter to conceal identity. For instance, there was one occasion when two Squad men who were watching a house had an idea they had been spotted by the men they were watching, but were by no means sure of the fact, and decided, therefore, to find out. Not far away, a furniture van was being unloaded. The Squad men walked over to it, had a quick word with the foreman, and a minute or two later were in shirt-sleeves and green aprons, helping in the work of unloading the van. Presently they saw the door of the

house they had been watching open, and two men carrying parcels emerge. This was what the detectives had been waiting for. The men were rather startled at being accosted by two removal men in green baize aprons, but they soon realized how they had been tricked into leaving their refuge and handed over their parcels with a grin of resignation. These parcels contained some quite valuable stolen property.

Perhaps the best recent example of Squad work in disguise was that in which, early in 1947, a detective-sergeant played the part of a bank manager in order to trap a gang who had planned to rob a bank in North London.

The case is one which has no counterpart in Scotland Yard history. It all began when the Flying Squad obtained information that a gang of six men was planning to rob a bank in Kentish Town. Their informant was able to reveal that the raid was planned to take place on a Friday, though he did not know which Friday. He did, however, know some details of the plan. The main idea was that the manager of the bank was to be kidnapped on his way home one afternoon, that his keys were to be obtained and that the gang would then return to Kentish Town and open up the bank for the raid.

The Squad's first action was to get the bank officials to agree to having a number of Squad officers hide themselves in the bank after closing hours so that the raiders could be caught red-handed. They, however, agreed to co-operate in an alternative plan, which was unlike any other scheme ever devised for the downfall of London crooks. The scheme, in brief, was for the bank manager to be impersonated by a Squad detective.

The officer selected for this hazardous role was Detective-Sergeant W. Deans, a young officer who was not merely of the bank manager's build, but was also not unlike him in appearance. From the Yard wardrobe he was carefully dressed in duplicates of the manager's clothes, and the disguise was so effective that when, on a Friday afternoon, he walked into the bank, shortly before the hour for closing, and entered the bank manager's room, even members of the bank staff were fooled.

Deans had learned his role well. He knew every detail of the manager's routine at bank-closing on Friday afternoons. Now he proceeded to carry it out. He had the manager's bunch of keys, and, promptly at closing-time, he appeared at the door of his office, saw the staff off the premises, locked the outside doors and set off for the Underground station that would carry him to the real manager's home in North London.

Right from the start there was a "bite". Hidden handily nearby was a Squad car, and detectives posted at strategic points round about had that bank door in constant view. As the pseudo manager walked off up the road with his brief-case and umbrella and evening paper under his arm these hidden watchers saw two men follow in his wake. These shadowers were themselves shadowed, of course, by

detectives. The trail led to the nearest Underground station, where Deans and the two sets of shadowers all took tickets to a Tube station in North London. From there Deans walked unhurriedly home—to the bank manager's home—again with two sets of shadowers at his heels. Both he and the detectives following him noted one sinister point. Not far from the suburban Tube station, up a quiet lane, a tradesman's motor van, painted green, was lurking. Two men were with it, and the detectives who were shadowing the crooks caught and registered the unspoken signal that passed between the two rough-looking men who were with the van and the two who were trailing Deans.

The officer played his role right out to the end. He pushed open the gate of the real manager's villa, opened the front door unhesitatingly with his key, and passed within. There, waiting for him, was the real bank manager, who had stayed at home that afternoon. Once they had seen him safely home the two crook shadowers turned on their heels and made for the Tube station to get a train that would take them back from this North London suburb to their home ground. The detectives who still tailed them did not fail to notice that the van, and the two confederates with it, had, by now, gone. For his part Deans, to be on the safe side, spent the next hour chatting with the bank manager and his wife. Then, resuming his own identity, he was let out into the winter's night by way of the back door, and went quietly on to his own home.

Nothing had really happened, save that the Squad knew, from the shadowing of the pseudo manager and the waiting van, that they were dealing with a gang that thoroughly understood the importance of detailed planning and timing. In point of fact they afterwards discovered that one of the gang had been a Commando non-commissioned officer during the war. What had really happened that afternoon had been something in the nature of a rehearsal.

It was exactly the same the next Friday, and the two Fridays after that. Then, on the fourth Friday, the gang really went into action. When Deans left the bank as usual, it was one of the worst nights of the worst winter Britain had known for generations. It had been snowing hard for twenty-four hours, the white flakes were still whirling down, and the streets were thickly covered.

The double trailing went on just as it had on the previous three Fridays. When Deans emerged from the Tube station and set out for the short rural walk to the manager's home, there, once again, parked in its customary spot, was the green van with its crew of two.

It was just after Deans had passed this van that things happened. He heard no steps behind him—the snow would muffle anything like that—but suddenly a crashing blow at the back of his head felled him. He had been hit with a stocking filled with sand, and the blow sent spinning into the snow his bowler hat, which had been specially padded against some such contingency as this attack.

The man who was wielding the sandbag was determined to make sure of his work, and Deans suffered several other blows before he was hoisted up and thrust into the interior of the van, which was then driven swiftly from the scene—so swiftly as to steal a march on the detectives who, as usual, had been trailing the men who were trailing Deans. These officers knew that, some little way distant, a Squad car was waiting with its engine ticking over, but Deans had been struck down and driven off in the green van before word could be got to it.

Deans, in the guise of the bank manager, had been kidnapped, and was being driven away to some unknown spot. That had not been expected. It had been thought that he would be seized and held prisoner in the van for a couple of hours or so, while the bank was being entered with his keys and raided. This was a very different kettle of fish.

A general wireless message was sent out from Scotland Yard—to which the Squad van, away on the northern outskirts of London, had promptly reported what had happened—warning every policeman and patrolling car to watch for a tradesman's van, painted green, of which a full description, of course, was given, but on no account to intercept it. There were still high hopes of catching the gang red-handed in the raid, and those hopes might well have been jeopardized had the members of the gang with the van got wind that there was a hue and cry for them. What the Squad men wanted was for the bank raid to continue according to plan. And in a little more than an hour concealed watchers at the bank saw one of the gang arrive, halt before the bank door, and insert a key in the lock. At that point he was pounced on and arrested. It was later proved that the key he had used was one of those taken from the unfortunate, but daring, Detective-Sergeant Deans.

Half an hour later there were further arrivals at the bank—the rest of the gang. They came by car, and their purpose was to carry out the long-planned raid. But again the Squad had bad luck—rather, they were dealing with men much more than normally acute to danger. At any rate, they had barely reached the door of the bank when some sudden suspicion was raised in their minds. They dashed for their car and were racing away before the Squad men posted round about realized what was happening.

But they were not at liberty for long. In the early hours of the morning they were all being rounded up, one by one, at Walthamstow.

And what of the intrepid Detective-Sergeant Deans? About the time the bandits reached the bank the Yard had received a telephone call from Barnet. He was in medical hands there after a night of adventure that well might have proved to be his last. Telling the story afterwards, he recalled the heavy blows struck him while he lay on the ground after being felled with the sandbag. "The next thing I remember," he related, "was being thrown heavily into a van, and someone placing a hand over my eyes and mouth. Then my scarf was tied over my eyes and adhesive tape placed over my lips. When I

groaned someone stuck something hard into my side and a voice said: 'This is a stick-up. Keep your mouth shut or it's your lot.' A little later someone asked, 'Are you sure he's the right bloke?' and another voice answered, 'He's the geezer all right—he's got the keys in his pocket.' "

Deans was pretty thoroughly searched by the bandits. Besides his keys they took his wallet, his fountain-pen, his money and a ring from his finger. He was thrown bodily out of the van at Barnet, and left lying face downwards in the snow on one of the coldest nights of the entire winter. After lying there for nearly an hour in a state of collapse, he managed to crawl to a house. The doctor who was called gave it as his view that, had the detective lain in the snow just a shade longer than he did, he would have died.

The six bandits appeared in due course at the Old Bailey, and their aggregate sentences totalled twenty-nine years' penal servitude. Lord Goddard, the Lord Chief Justice, commended Deans for his work, and a little later the intrepid sergeant, who suffered for months from the injuries he had received, was presented by the Bow Street magistrate with a cheque for £15 in recognition of all he had done and been through.

Here is another story of the Squad—one which is a good illustration of how weeks of hard work and ceaseless observation may result in crooks escaping the just penalty for their misdeeds, yet may also result in the country being saved great sums of money, without ever learning a word about it.

Early in 1947 a Squad man who happened to be in a London public-house chanced to overhear a conversation that made him prick up his ears. What was being discussed over drinks in that bar was nothing less than a plot for the holding up of a Stationery Office van carrying postal orders and savings stamps to the value of more than £3,000,000.

The detective gathered that a London gang was going to attempt this daring robbery, and his report set in motion a lot of wheels in the direction of undercover investigation. Eventually, the Squad found themselves in possession of the names and identities of the members of the gang. They were all men with criminal records, well known to the Squad. That meant that the Squad had not much difficulty in finding out where their headquarters was located. It was a room over a little café in Tottenham Court Road, and detectives of the Squad managed to install in that room a dictaphone and, much more important, to keep the fact unsuspected by the gang. From then on it was all plain sailing. Bit by bit the detectives were able to get in their hands all the details of the plot.

It was quite a simple plot, really. Somehow or other the gang had managed to get hold of some Stationery Office notepaper. On this were typed instructions, from what purported to be the Stationery Office Investigation Branch, authorizing two of the men, who were to pose as

detectives, to detain and question the driver and the escort of a certain Stationery Office van.

The gang knew exactly which van, and specified it. It was one which, once a week, collected a load of postal orders and savings stamps to the value of several million pounds from the Stationery Office in London and conveyed them to a distributing depot at High Wycombe, several miles from London.

For many weeks members of the gang carefully followed the van on every stage of its journey from London to High Wycombe, noting each detail of the route, times of leaving each point, and any customary stops made by the driver. It was part of the security arrangements that the exact route should be changed each week, there being four such changes in all. Which meant, as the gang discovered, that after a month Route No. 1 came round for use again, and so on. The gang also learned, and noted, that when a stop was made at a wayside café for refreshment, only one man entered the place, his companion staying strictly by the van on guard.

Now, even as the Government van was being shadowed by the crooks, so were the crooks being shadowed by Flying Squad men. For this work the police used no fewer than six separate vehicles—some disguised as private cars, some as tradesmen's vans. One, indeed, was, on occasion, loaded with sacks of fruit, another with piles of vegetables. These camouflaged police cars, posted at strategic points along the road, would take over the shadowing in relays, so that the crooks not should have their suspicions aroused by seeing familiar vehicles on their tail.

This business of double shadowing went on for eight long weeks, and at the end of that time the detectives had details of the entire daring plan. The Government driver's stop for a cup of coffee was a regular one, and the crooks had decided to use this fact. The plan was to watch the one man enter the café. Then the two pseudo detectives, with their faked credentials, would approach the man left guarding the van, display to him their "authority" and ask him to go with him to their car to answer a few questions about the theft of some Stationery Office paper, a sample of which they produced. The same procedure was to be followed with the other man when he left the café. The two Government men were then to be kept prisoner while other members of the gang drove the Stationery Office van off to a quiet country lane, where yet others of the band were waiting with a car to carry off the loot.

In full accord with the sagacity they had shown in other matters, the crooks had decided not to strip the van of all its rich contents. Their decision was to take enough stamps and postal orders to give them exactly £20,000 a piece—that and no more. They had made special plans for disposing of the stuff through receivers in different parts of the country, and they had, quite coolly, resolved that, when each

had his quota in hard cash, there was to be no more crime for any of them. It was to be a life of affluence and rectitude.

But nothing like that happened. The unexpected often turns up to ruin the best-laid plans. In this case the unexpected was a four-line paragraph in a London evening paper telling of a believed plot to rob a Government van which Buckinghamshire police had stumbled on. There were no details. But what appeared was quite enough. For the gang spotted it, and twenty-four hours before the deadline set for the coup the whole thing was called off.

It seemed that the Squad had wasted eight weeks' solid work, for, since the raid had not matured, there was nothing on which the gangsters could be brought to book. Yet it had one result. Hitherto, despite the value of the loads carried in the Stationery Office vans, neither drivers nor escort had been armed, this being in accord with the customary British authorities' discouragement of the use of arms even for matters of self-defence. With all the information they had compiled in this case, however, the Yard now persuaded the Stationery Office authorities that gangs were becoming more adept and dangerous in Britain and that the time had come when Government valuables should really be protected by armed men.

And so, today, all Stationery Office vans carry armed guards when engaged in the transport of valuable or vital loads.

CHAPTER VII

SECRETS OF THE CRIMINAL RECORDS OFFICE

SCOTLAND YARD has a habit—an almost fanatical habit—of always putting everything down on paper. It is largely because of this habit that the Yard has been able to establish its reputation over the years of being an organization that never forgets, and that always gets its man, even, it may be, many years after the crime which put his name on the list of the wanted was committed.

Right from its beginning the Criminal Investigation Department has laid stress on the importance of noting down anything, and everything, about a known criminal and his methods. In the beginning the first investigators—those forming the earliest detective section, set up over a hundred years ago—started it all by jotting down on scraps of paper or in their notebooks all they knew about the criminals with whom they came in contact.

Those first records were zealously stacked away on a shelf in the first one-room office of the Criminal Investigation Department. But the system, thus humbly started, has so grown that today there are more than 200 trained detectives and a large number of men and women civil servants all hard at work daily in a big department of Scotland Yard, filing and tabulating, not scraps of paper and thumbed note-books, but complete dossiers and photographs of every criminal or suspect coming under police notice.

This Criminal Records Office is today under the direction of a Scot, Superintendent Duncan. It contains the secrets and life histories of nearly a million people, any single one of which can be turned up in the space of a few minutes.

The work of the Criminal Records Office is split into two sections, each with a well-defined and differing function. The first deals with criminal records proper—the complete dossiers of all crooks known to the Yard. The second, and perhaps most important, section is that known as the Crime Index, which works in close co-operation with a Department known as S.2—a statistical branch which is under the control of Mr. Stanley Hobson, and which can be called the mechanical brain behind the work of the Criminal Investigation Department.

The dossiers filed away in the first section are the most complete of their kind in the world. Each dossier contains the individual crook's photographs, identification marks, full description, home address, the address of his relatives, friends, or even acquaintances, his convictions, sentences and releases from prison, his known or suspected confederates and scores of details gathered here and there by investigators ever since

the subject first came under the notice of the police. All these dossiers are cross-indexed under the various aliases used.

The most recent photographs in these dossiers are a great improvement on those of earlier years. The reason for this is a change in the method of obtaining them. It may not be generally known that photographs of criminals are taken both when they enter and when they leave a prison, and that these are the pictures which are filed away in the Yard dossiers. Until recently these prison pictures were not taken by expert photographers but by warders with a taste for the job, who would be paid so much for each sitting, or by some local photographer who would do the work on contract. The photographs would be confined to head and shoulders, side face and front face, and they were usually taken in a cell with poor lighting and under other difficult conditions. Many criminals, for instance, try all sorts of dodges to prevent good photographs of their facial characteristics being obtained. Old hands are especially expert at this. One man, who became known as "Rubber Face", was able to alter his facial expression entirely when before a camera in prison, and the photographs that were obtained proved to be useless for identification purposes.

For some time it was the general idea that prison photographs were of little use in helping young detectives to identify a man when he was at liberty, but that their real function was the assistance they provided once he was caught by aiding in the checking of such details as the characteristics of his ears, nose, mouth and so on.

Both the Yard experts and provincial police complained for years of the bad photographs which were constantly being sent in for their dossiers, and at length a change was made. Today there is an up-to-date studio in every prison, with a fully trained photographer on hand to take the pictures. The photographs now going into the Yard's dossiers show a crook's head and shoulders, his appearance full-length, and his gait when walking. There are also cine pictures, these latter being not merely filed away for record purposes but shown on a screen to police officers who may have the job of searching for the subjects in the flesh.

The operators of the Crime Index and of S.2 with which it is linked have been responsible for the catching of thousands of criminals without ever setting eyes on them. The work is purely mechanical, but its results are astonishing. No persistent criminal, or the man or woman who commits two or three crimes, has any chance of escaping this unseen net.

The success of this "mechanical brain" lies in the fact that crooks, like most other members of the community, are mostly creatures of habit. Each has his or her own individual methods of carrying out this or that piece of roguery. Even when they think up new tricks, or new ways of carrying out old tricks, very, very few seem to be able to effect any variation in the methods they employ. And those methods become

a trade mark, as easily read by the expert eye as an individual finger-print.

Neither do personal habits change. The way a man pares his nails, or holds his glass of ale, or lights his pipe, or swings his arms when walking, or parts his hair, or wears his hat—there are a hundred such individualities all carefully noted down and filed away, recorded on cards under hundreds of classified headings. The "method file" has proved invaluable at the Yard. Here is an example of how it works.

A call, we will suppose, reaches the Criminal Records Office from some local London police-station or, it may be, from a police-station in the provinces. "We are looking," says the message, "for a man who poses usually as a window-cleaner, when calling at a house he plans to rob. He is fond of claiming he was torpedoed while serving in the Navy, gives his name as Bill Smith, appears to walk with a limp, is five feet eight inches in height, has dark hair, and has a habit of scratching his ear."

The Records man to whom this inquiry is passed consults the "deformities" file. He finds records there of dozens of men with limps, some genuine, some assumed, so he turns next to the "habits" file. He discovers that there are quite a number of crooks who are fond of scratching their ears. But also there are a few who both walk with a limp and scratch their ears. A check with the "method" file confirms, without any doubt, that the man who poses as a window-cleaner, walks with a limp and is fond of ear-scratching is really John Smith, alias Tom Tiddler, alias Smart Sam; that he has operated in London and has been convicted several times for just the same type of offence. Other records show where he is likely to be picked up, if not his actual whereabouts at that moment.

Fraud is probably the most difficult of all crimes to detect, but the Yard's Crime Index has done much towards checking its incidence. Each fraud is indexed according to the individual *modus operandi* employed by the swindler.

All the information discovered by Crime Index is recorded on machines which punch dozens of little holes in a million classification cards. There is a card for every single crook known either to the Records Office or to the Finger-print Department, and the position of the hole indicates his habits, the method he uses, his favourite time for pulling off a job, the plans he usually makes for a getaway and a score of similar points. Turning up an individual card is a matter of seconds only.

Mr. Hobson, who started work at the Yard as an office boy thirty-three years ago, is, bear in mind, in charge of the Statistical Branch, and it is, therefore, his job to record other matters besides the histories and habits of criminals. He can tell you, by means of his wizard machine and its hole-punched cards, just how many crimes have been committed in the London area, or any special part of it, within the past twenty-four hours, how they were committed and just when. He can tell you in a

second how many policemen are available at a given time, how many are sick, how many calls the Yard has received and the results, the number of road crashes over any given period, and when, where and how they occurred, where crime is growing or decreasing, what black spots exist for road accidents and a thousand other things.

It is Hobson's department that is really the Yard's battle headquarters. It has, for instance, seven long rooms used as map rooms. Here are great maps and graphs which give at a glance the moving pattern of London crime and of every other factor in which the Yard is interested. One great map covers a space of thirty feet and carries no fewer than 20,000 little flags, each flag telling its own crime story.

It was largely the work of the desk detectives that brought about the arrest of a notorious housebreaker named Henry Williams, who achieved fame under the soubriquet "Flannelfoot", and proved one of the most elusive crooks Scotland Yard has ever had to deal with.

Flannelfoot—so called because he had a habit of covering his feet with pieces of flannel to avoid leaving footprints on flower-beds and the like—defied detection by the Yard for nearly five years, during which time he carried out nearly 2,000 robberies. He lived, very quietly, with his daughter in a flat in the West End of London, played an entirely lone hand and had a method of working which was entirely his own. That method was to select a definite suburban district, to which he would travel by Tube, being careful to jump aboard his train just as the automatic doors were closing, which was a precaution against being followed.

When he reached the district he had planned to raid, he would watch his opportunity and steal a cycle, on which he would ride to one of the houses he had marked down.

Leaving the cycle ready to hand, he would then effect entry by the time-honoured method of forcing a window or breaking a small pane of glass, over which he had placed a square of brown paper covered with treacle or glue to avoid the tinkle of falling glass. Once inside the house, he would get to work quickly. His search was for one thing and one thing only—cash. He was always careful never to take a single thing that could be identified. He had a knack of knowing where to look for cash, however. Usually it would be the housewife's little store in an ornament or kitchen drawer. When he had made his haul he would retrieve his cycle and ride calmly on to his next prospect.

Sometimes, during the night, he would make it a point to try to steal a railway season ticket issued in the area. Then, in the early hours of the morning, having done a busy night's work, he would cycle to the nearest station. If he was stopped by an inquisitive policeman—and he was stopped only once in the whole of his career—there was nothing on him which could be identified. He could say he was a workman going to work on early shift, and could produce a season ticket to prove it. If his right to the ticket should be challenged, he could readily

admit he had picked it up. That would not have been a very serious affair—for, after all, there was no stolen property of which he could be proved to be in possession.

Anyhow, as I say, Flannelfoot never was challenged, save once, and so these contingencies did not arise. For five long years he made an average of from £15 to £20 a week from his robberies, always working alone, always taking only cash, and always eluding every trap set for him.

Though he never realized it, however, all this time there were quiet, studious-looking men at the Yard who were slowly but surely building a net that would some day trap him. In fact, every one of the Flannelfoot robberies had been charted right from the start. Presently, as it became quite clear that these robberies were all the work of one man with a system of his own, Flannelfoot was given a special map all to himself, with little flags recording his latest series of robberies.

The men of S.2 noticed, after a time, that these Flannelfoot robberies followed a definite plan as to area. For instance, there would be half a dozen houses in the West of London entered, then half a dozen in the South, followed by half a dozen in the South-east and a similar number in some North-London suburb. Presently, after perhaps a year, the whole cycle would start all over again, areas being visited in exact rotation to the previous ones. It was clear enough that Flannelfoot was a man of rigid method, and patient work by the desk detectives made it clear that this rotation of areas was no accident but the result of definite planning by the elusive robber.

In due course the detectives were able to announce they were in a position to forecast Flannelfoot's next move. That was checked by the event, and it was proved accurate. Then, consulting their records, the men of S.2 reported that on such and such a night Flannelfoot would be operating at Ruislip. And the net began to close.

By this time other officers of the Criminal Investigation Department had a suspect in view, though they were not quite sure that he was, in truth, the elusive Flannelfoot. Nevertheless, working on the Ruislip date, watch on this suspect became a matter of importance. When the night arrived, therefore, there were hidden watchers round and about the flat where he lived as a perfectly respectable citizen.

It was about 10.30 p.m. when these hidden watchers saw the suspect leave his flat. Off he went to the Tube station and after him went a detective. Down on to the platform went followed and follower. But the detective had a stroke of bad luck that night. He had either not heard or had forgotten that it was Flannelfoot's invariable habit not to board a train until the automatic doors were on the point of closing—a habit designed, as I have mentioned, specially to shake off shadowers. At any rate the detective was not quick enough to follow his quarry through those fast-closing doors and could only watch, crestfallen, the train speeding out of the station. When he reported by 'phone to the

Yard that he had lost his man a Flying Squad car was promptly ordered to tour the Ruislip district on the off-chance of picking him up, and sure enough, at 2 a.m. Flannelfoot was picked up—while actually on the job. After he was arrested he admitted many more robberies than the Yard had knowledge of—the total he gave was something like 2,000. He was sentenced to five years' penal servitude but never lived to serve the term, dying in prison. But he might never have seen the inside of a prison cell had it not been for a number of little red flags on a map and a number of holes punched in a square of cardboard.

Printed under the direction of the Criminal Records Office is Britain's only secret daily newspaper. It contains no advertisements, is never seen by members of the public and cannot be bought. Yet it has a circulation of 60,000 copies each day.

This newspaper, which is marked Confidential, is the *Police Gazette*, which started as *The Public Hue and Cry* issued from Bow Street as long ago as 1829. It was then published weekly and contained advertised rewards and information about Service deserters and wanted criminals. It became the *Police Gazette* in 1883, and its office of issue became the Yard, and in 1914 the weekly issue became a daily one. Today, every police-station in Britain has a copy on file and copies are also sent to police forces in foreign countries and the Dominions.

The *Police Gazette*, which has five supplements, including a page of pictures, contains all the latest news about crime and criminals. It is even furnished with a "Stop Press" corner, in which will be recorded details of the latest murder or jewel robbery.

In the pages of this crime sheet will be found full lists and descriptions of stolen jewellery and full descriptions of wanted men and women, with, if they are known at the Yard, the Criminal Records Office number assigned to each. There are photographs of missing property, more photographs of crooks on the run. The really big-time crooks, and, of course, men and women wanted for some sensational murder, whether in London or the provinces, are, not unnaturally, given pride of place on the front page.

Each day a smaller sheet known as *Information* is issued in two editions—morning and evening. The contents of this are read out to all policemen reporting for duty. This gives the highlights of the crime news, with special emphasis on important and last-minute happenings.

Then there are two issues of a special supplement. One is known as *Supplement A* and is entirely pictorial, containing photographs of convicts released from prison on licence or about to be released, photographs of aliens and Service deserters. The other supplement is devoted to descriptions of stolen motor-cars.

Soon after the last war ended the Yard compiled a special book containing the photographs and personal details of no fewer than 2,000 notorious crooks who had managed to elude the police net for years,

and who were still on the "wanted" list. Most of the offences for which they were wanted had been committed years ago, and care was, therefore, taken only to include among the 2,000 those who, it was believed, were still alive and against whom it would still be possible to produce witnesses.

This secret book proved its worth not so long ago, when a man stepped jauntily off an air liner that had brought him from the United States. There were, as usual, a couple of Special Branch detectives on duty at the airport, and for some reason they were just a little suspicious of the new arrival's identity. A quick look at the secret book brought to light an unmistakable reproduction of the man's features, and he was promptly placed in a car and taken up to the Yard. Next day he appeared in court charged with an offence he had committed no less than seventeen years earlier.

The more recent records compiled by the Records Office and the men of S.2 revealed the disturbing fact that in a twelve-months' period more than 10,000 young people between the ages of 11 and 20 were arrested for indictable offences—that is, offences which go for trial before judge and jury. This is the biggest of any criminal group. In the age groups from 21 to 30 there were 5,000 people arrested, and the total for age groups 31 to 40 was 5,500. Young desperadoes up to the age of 20 committed nearly as many crimes as men and women of all other age groups put together. It was established that a large number of youths had linked up with the big gangs, acting as spotters and spies, and, in some cases, were being used to effect entry into premises by clambering through windows too small to accommodate more mature figures.

One further facet of headquarters office work is that dealing with missing persons. On an average, twenty men and women vanish every day in Britain, and of the many thousands who have been reported missing since 1939 the names of more than 20,000 are still filed away at Scotland Yard as still missing. Investigations into these cases have been thorough, but have failed to provide a single clue as to what has happened. Nevertheless efforts to trace them go on.

A check with the Yard's missing persons bureau is made whenever an unidentified body is taken from the Thames or discovered after an accident, or whenever a hospital reports the admission of a person suffering from loss of memory. In the main, however, it may be taken for granted that people who disappear have some good personal reason for doing so—a reason that has nothing whatever to do with desire to evade the penalty for some criminal or near-criminal offence. Scotland Yard men are good psychologists, and it does not take them very long to hazard a pretty good guess why this son or daughter, or that husband or wife, has decided to make a new life elsewhere.

As in the United States, Scotland Yard will go to unlimited trouble to establish the identity of an unknown whose body has been found—

even though there be at first no suspicion of foul play. A striking example of this occurred during the late war. Many months after Hitler's bombs had laid a South London building in ruins, the body of an unknown woman was found in the piles of debris. The remains were examined by Mr. Keith Simpson, a Home Office pathologist, and he was soon able to tell the Yard men that the woman had been murdered. That was all very well, but there was nothing much the Yard could do about it until the woman's identity had been established, and it was here that Keith Simpson attempted a remarkable piece of reconstruction.

The body had been many months buried and features and other physical attributes were completely missing. But the pathologist patiently set to work to rebuild round the skeleton that remained not merely the body of the woman the proportions enabled him to visualize, but the head and face as well. The result was photographed and circulated to various police-stations throughout London, and within an amazingly short time was identified as that of a woman who had not been seen since the date of the blitz that had created the debris where the body was found. Careful checking put the identity beyond doubt, and from that it was but another step to tracking down the man who had murdered her. He had committed what must have seemed to him to be the perfect crime, especially when whole months went by without discovery of the body. And he must have argued to himself that even when that discovery should at length be made it would be too late to establish whether the woman had died as a result of the bombing or had in fact been murdered. What the pathologist's wizardry established, however, was not merely the woman's identity—which the murderer must have thought impossible after the lapse of time—but the fact that she had been strangled. Her murderer paid the penalty for his crime after detective work which stands in the records as a classical example of what scientific investigation can really accomplish.

One of the most astonishing cases of disappearance concerns an American negro, for whom the Yard has been searching fruitlessly ever since May 1946. From that date a large poster bearing his picture and full description has been exhibited at every railway station, café and in hundreds of other prominent spots throughout Britain. The man is six feet tall and has many distinguishing marks, so that one would think he would be easily recognizable and that it would be only a matter of hours before some clue to his whereabouts would be in the hands of the Yard.

But this six-foot negro has vanished as completely as if he had never been in England at all. If he is ever caught he will face a trial for alleged murder. In any case, his photograph and description will remain in the files of the Criminal Records Office against the day when some word of what has happened to him turns up—though that day may be years distant.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BLACK MUSEUM

ONE afternoon, a good many years ago, a policeman walked into the office of the then Scotland Yard and handed to his superior officer a small parcel wrapped up in brown paper and tied with a piece of twine.

The senior man untied the parcel curiously, parted the paper and viewed the contents with distaste. For it was the death-mask of a man who had not died happily; the death-mask, in fact, of a murderer who had been hanged the previous day.

It was a truly gruesome relic, too gruesome, decided the senior, to be allowed to remain there in the office. But down below, in the basement of the old building, there were cellars, and it was to an unused shelf in one of these cellars—a long corridor-like place—that the death mask was ultimately consigned.

That was the beginning of a collection of crime relics and exhibits which with the passing years was to become one of the most famous museums in the world—Scotland Yard's Black Museum. Today the collection is still housed underground—in an oblong brick cellar some twenty-five feet long by twelve feet wide, with whitewashed walls, lying at the end of a dark and dismal corridor and entered only through an old iron door the key to which is jealously guarded.

The Scotland Yard authorities do not encourage visits by laymen to this macabre exhibition. Very few private visitors to the Yard, indeed, have ever been allowed to set foot in it, and there are those among the senior detectives at the Yard who have never yet passed through that old iron door. The authorities' view is that this collection of crime exhibits is kept for the benefit and instruction of *bona fide* crime investigators and others, such as criminal lawyers, who are professionally interested, and the merely curious are rigidly excluded. Today young Criminal Investigation Department detectives visit the museum as part of their training course, and are expected to write an essay on what they have observed in it.

The first thing the eyes of the visitor alight on in the museum is a series of high shelves on which rest rows of what he will at first sight take to be grotesque caricatures of the human face, but which, his guide will calmly inform him, are actual death masks of notorious criminals. In point of fact, each of these masks is that of a murderer—men and women who paid long ago for their crimes on the scaffold. The mask was taken within an hour or two of the drop having been sprung, and beside each one hangs the actual rope with which the execution was carried out.

From one of these death-masks sprout a few strands of hair. It seems to be quite healthy hair, and to be really growing out of the plaster of the mask. Yet that mask was taken from a newly executed man several generations ago. The guide will tell you that by some strange freak that hair began to grow long after the mask became an exhibit in the museum. There is no Yard man alive today who can vouch for the truth of that. In any case, the mystery of those "growing" wisps of human hair has never yet been satisfactorily explained.

One of the strangest of all the exhibits is a pin-cushion made entirely from the hair of a woman. She was a drunkard, and she had been in prison more than three hundred times for drunkenness. She started making that pin-cushion, with hair from her own head, after her second conviction, and when her term of imprisonment was ended she left the scrap of work with the head wardress. When she returned in a week or so she asked for it, and in the silence of her cell added a little more to what she had begun. This went on throughout the entire tale of her trips to prison until, in the end, she had nearly completed it. It was then she fell ill and was taken to the prison infirmary. She knew full well she was dying, and, almost with her last breath, she insisted on her pin-cushion being presented to the Yard for inclusion among the museum exhibits. And there it is today—an extremely beautiful piece of work which probably has no counterpart anywhere in the world.

The story of Jack the Ripper is, of course, a murder mystery classic. It is the story of a mystery killer who, between Christmas 1887 and July 1889, murdered and terribly mutilated no fewer than eight street women in the East End of London, leaving no clue to his identity and presenting the biggest problem Scotland Yard has ever been called on to try and solve. They never did solve it satisfactorily and completely. No one was ever arrested for these horrible crimes, although a Polish Jew known to the police as a sexual maniac was believed to have been responsible for them.

However that may be, here in the Yard's Black Museum are authentic relics of the Ripper—probably the only ones in existence. Chief among them are two notes which he wrote, one to the police and one to a news agency, when the scare caused by his series of murders was at its height and something akin to panic was spreading through the dark streets and alleyways of the East End. Those two notes, giving warning of further attacks, were declared at the time of their receipt to have been written in human blood—the Ripper's own. Whatever the investigators of the 'eighties may have thought, Scotland Yard scientists of the present day have made no bones about exploding that dramatic touch. On their authority, I can state that the notes were penned in nothing more sinister than red ink.

Another front-rank crook who is well represented among the exhibits is Charles Peace, who has a niche of his own in Britain's crime gallery. Peace was Britain's most notorious burglar. He was also a

murderer, for he shot a policeman in Manchester in 1876 and also a man who was his neighbour in Sheffield. Peace, of course, was a resourceful fellow. That has always been clear. He lived the life of a quiet, highly respectable, retired tradesman with a taste for violin playing by day, and by night was a burglar of cold nerve and unlimited daring. But just how resourceful he really was is amply demonstrated by the array of criminal tools Peace designed and used, and which are now among the high-lights of the museum's exhibits.

There is, for instance, his collapsible ladder. Peace invented and fashioned it himself, more than seventy years ago. And it would today be the envy of any professional burglar. Made from a long silken rope, it is furnished with a cunningly arranged series of detachable hooks and is so designed that it could be quickly folded up and carried in a coat pocket with such lack of bulk that no suspicion would be aroused.

Another ingenious tool used by Peace was a false arm, also furnished with an array of several hooks, each of which had its special purpose in the inventive mind of the burglar, who was not averse from turning plain thief or pickpocket when it suited his book. There are, too, many skeleton keys, all of which could be fitted snugly inside that false arm when not in use.

Standing at one side of the museum is a bath—an ordinary household bath. Nothing much to look at, yet a bath with a history. For this is the actual bath in which a man named Smith drowned his newly-married wife and thus took the first steps that were to lead to trial for murder and his eventual execution. Smith had tried his bath-murder method before, which is why he has a niche of his own in the British crime gallery as "Brides in the Bath" Smith. His other murders had remained undetected and he might have got away with this last one but for the fact that a newspaper report of the inquest on the victim was read by someone who knew of the deaths of the previous wives, and marvelled at the coincidence that they should all have met their deaths simply while taking a bath.

There are travelling trunks in the museum, a number of which have been closely connected with murders which hit the headlines in their day. One, a big black trunk with a domed lid, figured in a notable murder of the nineteen twenties. It had been found in a railway cloak-room at Charing Cross, and there was a woman's dismembered body in it. There was something else—a much-used duster from which an identification mark had long since been worn away, yet which was in the end to bring a man to the gallows.

The body of the woman was soon identified—it was that of a woman who had been parted from her husband and whose way of life was not altogether above suspicion. There was not much difficulty in finding out where the trunk had come from. It had been sold by a Brixton dealer to a man who had later been seen to load it on

to a taxi-cab from an office just across the way from a local police-station at Westminster.

The police soon obtained the name of this man—but that was all. For he had closed up his office—he was in a precarious way of business as an estate agent—and had vanished utterly among London's millions. The Yard men badly wanted to see this estate agent, for among the things discovered in that one-room office of his had been a used match-stick—just a fragment wedged in the bottom of a cane wastepaper basket which had been cleared of all its contents long before the detectives had begun to take any interest in the place. That slender matchstick bore a tiny trace of what was proved to be human blood, and the detectives came to the shrewd conclusion that it was in this room the woman in the trunk had been first killed and then dismembered.

Utterly unable to trace the estate agent, despite all the publicity the case received, the detectives handling the case fell back on that much-used duster. The laundry mark had been cut from it, but under the microscope the square of fabric showed signs of having at one time borne a name, printed on it in the way public-houses sometimes stamp their glass cloths. So they patiently set to work to try and find out whether this had once come from a London public-house, and, if so, which one.

They found that out all right. At a certain public-house right on the other side of London the duster was at last identified as one that had been lost from there. Here was a lead, and the detectives concentrated on it. It meant questioning the barmaids, and the officers found one among them who—not knowing where the duster had been found, or its significance—seemed vaguely to remember it but could not say where or when she had last seen it. That was not so very important compared with another fact the detectives unearthed—that this particular barmaid bore the same name as that of the man they were searching for, and that she was the wife of a young estate agent.

They asked her where her husband was, and that she did not know. The detectives believed her, but they also believed something else—that her husband must be getting short of money, wherever he was hiding, and that it was a hundred to one that he would make some effort to get in touch with his wage-earning wife.

So, although she never suspected it, they watched her, day and night. And, after about a week of this, the wife one day received a telephone call, upon which she got leave from her employer and set out on a trip across London to Camberwell. Detectives were shadowing her every part of the way. They watched her meet her husband—on a corner of a street, the man for whom all Britain had been searching.

Now about that fragment of bloodstained matchstick. At the trial it emerged that what the detectives had so shrewdly surmised had in fact happened. The estate agent had met the woman, invited her to his

office, quarrelled with her, struck and killed her. Then, becoming scared, he had dismembered the body, hidden it in the trunk, left that gruesome piece of luggage at a cloakroom, and vanished. The safety he sought might well have been his had it not been for smart detective work in tracing that old "lost duster".

Not far away from the black trunk are a number of beautifully made models—all of them the scenes of notorious murders. One in particular is a model of a neat, comfortable-looking seaside bungalow—the bungalow in fact where, in the 'twenties, a handsome Lothario named Patrick Mahon killed a young woman named Emily Kaye, whose affections and money he had both filched. Mahon was yet another who found that the most difficult task facing a murderer is the secret disposal of his victim's body. Mahon tried dismemberment first, then fire—the bungalow stove. Some of the resultant calcined bones he distributed on the foreshore facing the bungalow he had rented. Others he attempted to dispose of in various ways, such as throwing them from the carriage of a train in which he travelled up to London from the South coast.

Mahon, however, was not so very ingenious in disposing of other things connected with his crime—notably the knife with which the dismemberment of his victim was carried out. This he left in a suit-case at a London railway station, and there it was presently discovered by a private detective who had been engaged by Mahon's wife to inquire into the reason for his prolonged absences from home. And, of course, one discovery led to another. Such as, for instance, the fact that the day after Emily Kaye's death he was entertaining another young lady in the death bungalow, to which she had been invited for the week-end. She had not the slightest suspicion that the locked door of one of the rooms held the secret of one of the most sensational crimes Britain had known for years.

With the murder bungalow is a copy of one of the most gruesome crime photographs ever taken in Britain. It shows Sir Bernard Spilsbury, the famous pathologist, working at two long trestle tables set up for him outside the bungalow—working with the cold detachment of the pathologist on the dismembered portions of a human body that had once belonged to the attractive Miss Kaye.

There are many other exhibits each of which tells a story of criminal resource and skill. There is a gold brick—a bar of base metal so cleverly covered with a thin skin of real gold that when the victim of the swindle for which it was used took it to be tested and assayed by a jeweller it was pronounced genuine without any hesitation. There are loaded dice of all types, and a roulette wheel which was controlled by a magnetic ring worn by a member of a gang of sharks and which enabled him by a slight and unsuspicious movement of the hand to stop its spinning at whatever point he chose. There is an ingenious key which is probably the most remarkable key ever designed for crooked use. A key that

looks just like an ordinary one yet which is really not one key but ten different keys. It was the product of the inventive mind of a man named Frederick Guy Browne, who was hanged some years ago for his part in the murder of a country policeman on an Essex road in the early hours of a summer's morning. That policeman was not merely shot dead. A particularly revolting point of this crime was that while the officer lay spread-eagled on the roadway either Browne or his companion, a well-educated ne'er-do-well named William Kennedy, who was also hanged, shot further bullets into the dead officer's eyes with the object of destroying any photograph of his slayer that might be imprinted on the retina. The circumstances helped to make this killing one of the most sensational murders in modern British criminology.

There are cleverly constructed dummy safes, light to move about but designed to take the place of real safes removed from offices by burglars, and thus lull the suspicions of any passing patrol officer making his customary late-night inspection through a spotting-hole.

There are, too, ingenious attachments to fit up the sleeve of a card-sharper so that a wanted ace or other card can slip up and down the sleeve as required. And a complete set of playing-cards which was once made by a man from memory in the prison cell where his misdeeds had landed him. To say nothing of a tray fitted with a tiny mirror so that it gave the card-sharper who designed it a most valuable view of his opponent's hand.

A collapsible jemmy and a collapsible life-preserver, both made to fold up into so small a compass that they fit snugly into a jacket pocket, are eloquent of further misapplied ingenuity, and there are specially made revolvers so tiny that they can fit into a woman's money purse only an inch or two long or be carried unseen in the palm of a feminine hand.

A collapsible tubular steel frame, fitted with tiny metal wheels, bears mute testimony to a new technique devised by a gang of safe robbers. It was found in a garage and at first excited no suspicion in the minds of searching detectives. Second thoughts, however, revealed its real purpose. Instead of cracking a heavy safe on the spot in a burgled office the gang carried this folding trolley in their car, wheeled the safe out on it and slipped off to some secluded spot to open it with more safety and leisure than would otherwise be afforded them.

Among various examples of counterfeit money are £5 notes which painstaking forgers have drawn entirely by hand. One is a perfect copy of an old note drawn entirely in pen and ink by a famous forger. It must have taken him long hours to make that single note, and Yard detectives have often marvelled just why he did it. It might, of course, have been a case of art for art's sake.

There is a 10*s.* and a £1 note both neatly split in two, an operation so delicately performed that few but experts could ever detect that they had been doubled. All that would be noted was that the notes

were rather on the thin side. This remarkable piece of chicanery was scotched by a Bank of England device of having a slender metal thread run through the centre of each note in the course of its manufacture.

In this Black Museum, too, are quite a number of examples of the artfulness of luggage thieves. Suit-cases and bags with trick bottoms, for instance, which enable a thief to slip one adroitly over a similar article already marked down for loot and grip it so securely with hidden springs that it can then be picked up and carried away inside the fake. This is the sort of thing that has enabled station thieves to slip off with thousands of pounds' worth of property of travellers from the great London termini.

Tools for the opening of safes are well represented. They include cunningly designed braces and bits, including one the power for which can be supplied by the use of an ordinary bicycle wheel. Yet perhaps far more ingenious than this is the pack of ordinary playing cards each of which is marked by a minute speck of red. The story behind that is that the card-sharper who once owned them found himself in such alert company that he was utterly cut off from practising the ordinary everyday tricks of his repertoire and so had to fall back on a quick bit of improvisation. He overcame his difficulty by secretly pricking a finger and swiftly marking his cards during the progress of the game with a tiny spot of his own blood. It worked for a little while, but its eventual detection is made clear by the fact that his unique pack of cards lies here in the Yard's Black Museum.

There is a shred of cloth, insignificant and unremarkable to look at, yet which was sufficient to send a car-driver beneath whose vehicle it was found to pay the penalty for having knocked down and killed an unfortunate woman pedestrian. There is the preserved finger of a notorious pickpocket, lost in an accident when he was in flight from the police. When later he was arrested for his old game of picking pockets he thought he had a cast-iron defence—that this gentle art of making a living was no longer open to him because he had had the misfortune to lose that well-trained little finger of his. The Yard men had an answer to that, however. They were able to put forward the argument that this master pickpocket had spent months practising daily how to use other fingers to overcome his disability. Moreover, they were able to put witnesses in the box to bear out that assertion. And so the pickpocket found all his ingenious efforts to beat the rap thwarted.

One of the most recent additions to the Yard's collection is a riding-switch, an ordinary-looking switch with a simple horn handle. Nothing much to look at, yet it figured in London's most sensational murder case of the post-war years: the case in which a young ex-airman named Neville Heath killed, in circumstances of unexampled sadistic brutality, two attractive young women. One of his victims was slain in the bedroom of a London hotel, the other on the beach of fashionable Bournemouth, while the police were still hunting him for the first crime. This riding-

switch figured in the first murder. It was used to perpetrate savage injuries on the victim of that killing—a young woman of artistic leanings named Marjorie Gardner.

Had a man not been found drunk at the wheel of his car one night the Museum would be lacking one of its most remarkable exhibits in the burglary category. This is one of the most complete kits of tools a burglar can ever have carried. Apart from beautifully made implements of orthodox character, this kit contains pieces of mica of different sizes, all used for the cunning manipulation of locks. The kit, too, has a little receptacle containing an assortment of drugs for the doping of any watchdogs encountered during burglarious outings.

As I say, this kit, from which the Yard were to learn a number of valuable lessons, fell into police hands because its owner had had just one drink too many. For, when a uniformed constable arrested him for his drunkenness and a search was made of the car, a strange-looking single tool was found in the back seat. That led to a search of the man's house, and it was there that this complete kit was located and the man's true occupation in life revealed. It was found that he had been playing the role of a lone burglar for more than a year. Working always alone, he had burgled scores of luxury flats in London as well as a number of well-known country houses. He had managed to get away with thousands of pounds' worth of jewellery—and he made only one mistake —that of taking one drink too many.

Incidentally, I helped to complete one of the exhibits in this unique crime museum. The case concerned was one in which a one-legged man murdered a young girl at Camden Town. A rather remarkable one-legged man. By day he limped about on crutches, playing a concertina as a street beggar, and collecting alms from the charitable; while at night he strapped on an excellent false leg and, in impeccable evening dress, lived the life of a man-about-town in West End clubs and restaurants. In this guise the fact that he was wearing a false leg was almost undetectable, so adroitly did he manipulate it.

Now, this man of two lives had committed his murder in the surroundings where he was known only as a legless concertina-player, and the detectives who were combing London for him had only those pictures which showed him as a personable young man about Town, with two apparently normal legs. They badly wanted one of him in his beggar pose, and it was this I was able eventually able to supply—a small tintype photograph taken by an itinerant street photographer. Side by side the two photographs now tell their little story in the Black Museum.

An inch or two away is a scrap of paper bearing the imprint of a couple of words which had been pencil-scrawled on a sheet of paper beneath which it had lain unobserved. Those two words are part of an address, and their discovery hanged a man. Such are the tiny things by which baffling crimes are solved.

CHAPTER IX

THE YARD'S WOMEN DETECTIVES

FOR more than twenty years Scotland Yard has had a women's police section. Trimly uniformed, alert, plucky women who patrol the streets of London just like their male colleagues, in all weathers and at all hours, ready to handle anything that comes their way, from the tackling of boisterous drunks to the advising of lost and frightened girls.

What Scotland Yard has never had is a special women's Criminal Investigation Department section. That does not mean Scotland Yard has not got its women detectives. It has—a hand-picked group of women sleuths whose work over the last ten years has been of exceptional value, not to say an eye-opener, to those who were perhaps just a little prejudiced at the idea that the woman detective could be a practical proposition in the daily business of crime-fighting.

London's women detectives are all specially chosen from the ranks of the uniformed women police, and then seconded for work with the Criminal Investigation Department and the Special Branch. Each one of them is an expert in the art of disguise, has given proof of possessing in full the qualities of self-reliance, intrepidity and doggedness necessary in undercover work of importance, and each, in other ways, has shown herself fully qualified for the role of detective.

It was shortly before the last war that Scotland Yard's women detectives had the opportunity of showing their true worth. In those years the desperate members of the Irish Republican Army conceived the idea of embarking on a bombing campaign in Britain. That campaign was no haphazard hit-or-miss affair. It was extremely well organized, had its own very efficient intelligence service and, altogether, proved a really tough problem for the men of the Special Branch, whose job it was to track down these plotters and keep them under constant observation.

What became pretty obvious was the fact that the I.R.A. plotters had no difficulty in recognizing the Special Branch men who were put on their trail—and knowing the man who is trailing you makes the business of avoiding or hoodwinking him comparatively simple. It was to counter this blunting of Special Branch activity that the use of women detectives was decided on.

Those selected did their work brilliantly. One managed to get employment as a maid in a house where several ringleaders of the plotters were staying. She was an extremely efficient maid, one who went about her daily household tasks with the quiet deftness of the

trained domestic. A pleasant, smiling girl whom it was always nice to greet yet who knew her place and kept it. A girl who could wait at table and was not above running little errands if she were asked nicely.

Rose, as the Irish plotters knew her, was quite a jewel of a maid. She stayed in the house six weeks. Then one quiet evening two or three cars slid to a stop outside the house, at an hour when most of the plotters were eating their evening meal. The cars held Special Branch detectives, and no one seemed more surprised than the efficient girl who was waiting at table when the meal was interrupted and those of the Irish plotters who were present were arrested. Just as smoothly in other parts of London that night others of the plotting Irishmen were taken.

What had made those arrests so easy was very largely the work of this woman detective who, for six weeks, had listened to scraps of talk, noted the plotters' comings and goings, and gathered other invaluable evidence which she had somehow managed to report to the Yard without once arousing the faintest breath of suspicion. Indeed, even after the arrests were made the part Rose had played was never once suspected. She just left her job in a perfectly normal way—that of having acquired another—and quietly faded out of the picture. And as she was never required to appear in a witness-box her identity remained a well-kept secret.

In the same way the identity of another woman detective with whose discoveries her own had dovetailed remained undisclosed. This second girl took lodgings near the house where the Irish plotters were staying, and it was her special job to trail them, one by one, on such occasions as they went abroad into the London streets.

Male detectives, as I have said, had at first been assigned to that job, and had been beaten, largely because the plotters were able easily to spot them for what they were. This woman detective, however, was never in the same role two days running when engaged in her shadowing work. She posed as an old woman, as a nurse with a pram—the baby in which, incidentally, she had borrowed for the purpose from the wife of a Yard constable—as a woman newspaper-seller, as a flower woman, as a smart young typist, and once as a shambling, middle-aged man. Her disguises, in fact, were works of art. What made them so effective, of course, was not just a matter of wearing wigs and many changes of raiment, but the high degree of acting ability that enabled the girl to carry off her various roles in the broad light of day without exciting the slightest suspicion that she was not all she appeared to be.

One other woman detective from the Yard was doing just the same kind of work, and it was very largely due to the effective sleuthing of this trio that the Yard was finally able to round up the Irish bomb plotters and scotch plans for causing quite a lot of trouble in the English capital. I do not need to stress the point that, for their own safety, these three women had to be endowed with qualities of coolness,

courage, resolution and quick thinking. The game each of them was playing was a highly dangerous one, for one slip would have landed them into the hands of men pledged to stick at nothing that would ensure the preservation of their desperate plans.

Today there are still women detectives at the Yard doing work just as daring and dangerous—and doing it just as effectively. One not long ago played a leading part and a risky one in the breaking up of one of the biggest and most dangerous gangs of receivers London had known.

There were four men and five women in this gang, and from their headquarters in a flat in Frith Street, Soho, they for some time managed to run a flourishing business which had the twin angles of receiving stolen property and providing refuge for Service deserters, that refuge being dependent on the deserters carrying out scheduled robberies and handing over a substantial portion of such loot as was acquired.

The Yard had not much doubt about what was going on, but knowing a thing and proving it are two very different propositions. As had happened before, male officers encountered nothing but a blank wall in their search for this all-important evidence, and it was then that the services of a woman detective were enlisted.

The flat in Frith Street was permanently occupied by two of the five women members of the gang. To use it as a headquarters was really a cunning idea, for, situated in the heart of the West End "bad lands", it would to all intents and purposes merely be one more resort of London street-walkers, and a place where constant comings and goings would raise no undue curiosity. Under cover of darkness, therefore, thieves could bring their stolen goods to such a rendezvous without running any undue risk of discovery.

Now, the men of Scotland Yard could, of course, have raided the flat at any time they wished. But what the detectives really wanted to do was to lay by the heels the real leaders of the gang. For it seemed obvious enough that the women were merely acting as a "front" for male crooks who preferred to remain unknown, in the safety of the shadows.

A raid then would have brought the women into the police net, would also have led to the recovery of a certain amount of stolen property. It would further, of course, have led to the closing up of this particular thieves' kitchen. But it would not have led to the detection and arrest of the men in the background, who after all were the real crooks. The women would have kept tight lips, gone to prison, and that would have been that.

The Yard chiefs felt they could do much better than that. Thus it came about that a call went out to the women police for a volunteer for some rather unpleasant and distinctly dangerous work. Quite a number of the Yard's female detectives put their names forward, and from these volunteers a young woman was finally chosen for an assignment that was to keep her fully occupied for some months.

She cut out her police associations altogether and went to live in a dingy third-floor back bedroom in one of the narrow streets of the Soho of the shadows—the Soho where vice and crime march hand in hand. She changed her hair style, used lipstick and face powder lavishly, and dressed with that flashy motif that is the hall-mark of the street-walker in every capital of the world. And thus disguised she sallied forth—not, one imagines, altogether without a quaking heart—into the night life of the West End.

She made the rounds of the more notable haunts, sauntered slowly in the customary manner of her "profession" down the usual streets. It was horrible work. Policemen on the beat, not in the secret, eyed her speculatively, noting that one more newcomer was treading the well-worn paths of vice. Sisters of the pavement, singly, in pairs or in groups of three, halting at street corners, eyed her also, but in their case with stark disfavour—the resentful stare of the practitioner who observes competition and possible poaching on hard-won preserves. Sometimes men stopped her, and, choking down her repugnance, she had to engage them in desultory conversation under the eyes of these other women, lest they suspect her for the fake she was.

She was out, trudging back and forth in the West End streets until long after midnight, and she did that for weeks, long, lonely weeks, before she could record any result at all. And that result, to the layman, would seem precious small. It was merely that, in a West End bar, one of the professionals allowed her one night to treat her to a Scotch. A tiny thing, but it represented the first opening of a door that had up to now been kept fast closed against her. For previous approaches of this kind had been stonily rejected.

That first drink led to another, and the next night the two women met again, by chance on the part of the professional, by design, of course, on the part of the Scotland Yard woman. And presently a third woman drifted in and joined them at the bar. That night the woman detective crept wearily back to her Soho room with the first elation she had felt in her heart for weeks. Queer elation, springing as it did from the realization that these two fallen women had accepted her as one of themselves.

That was, of course, only the beginning. The woman detective realized only too well that she was as yet only on the outer fringe of the field of her inquiries. And she dared not start asking any questions—the "bush telegraph" of Soho would get to work in the twinkling of an eye and any hopes of her succeeding after that would be just vain. She had to play her game cautiously and with infinite patience. And she did just that, trailing about the West End streets night after night in her pose of a street-walker, meeting first one and then another of the sisterhood in this bar and that, dodging the policemen on their beats and generally just waiting for the chance that one night must surely come.

In due course it did. An introduction, rough and ready, but none

the less an introduction, to a smartly-dressed keen-eyed blonde who, as the detective well knew, was one of the occupants of the gang's flat in Frith Street.

The woman detective played her cards carefully and well. She did not strain that first meeting. But she saw to it that a couple of nights later she was able to exchange a few words again with the blonde. And from there it was only a step to meeting, in the weeks that followed, other female members of the gang.

Then began the woman detective's real work. She could not ask questions—questions are unpopular, even dangerous, among the night-hawks of Soho. But she could and did keep her eyes and ears open, and presently she was storing away stray pointers to the men associates of the women—not their customers, but their fellow gang members.

All this took months, but when she was sure, and not before, she was able to tip off the Yard with the identities of men and women whom it would pay to watch. And watched they were from that moment—night and day—with the result that quite a bulky dossier was presently in course of preparation—a dossier that was quite an illuminating record of the activities of five women and four men.

One night the police made their swoop on the flat in Frith Street. They did not find the entire nine members of the gang there—but that did not matter much, since they could be picked up elsewhere now that their haunts were known. What they did find, however, in a locked room, was an immense amount of booty, the loot from a score or more of London robberies that had been marked off on the list of unsolved crimes.

In due course the nine members of this precious gang appeared in the Old Bailey dock and each was given a long term of penal servitude. But long before that the woman whose dogged and daring persistence had placed them in that dock had given up her dingy back bedroom in a Soho side street and gone thankfully back to a cleaner and less sordid world. To have tarried would have been to court personal danger, for Soho has a way of revenging itself on those who penetrate its iron curtain and unmask the members of its underworld. As it was, this woman detective was able so completely to step out of her Soho role and personality that, back once more on the Force, she could never be recognized. Which means, of course, that she is possessed of unusual histrionic ability, the ability to assume a certain character and then to cast it from her utterly.

On many occasions Scotland Yard's women detectives have taken other grave risks when acting as decoys for the trapping of noxious bag-snatchers, sex maniacs and other desperadoes whose special prey is women. At the beginning of 1947 one woman detective was seriously injured while acting as a decoy on Tooting Common, on the southern outskirts of the capital. In this case the Yard had for many weeks received continual complaints of women passing over the Common at

night-time being attacked and having their bags snatched from under their arms. Male detectives were specially posted to keep observation, but the attacker proved a wily bird and the results were exactly nil. It was then decided to enlist the services of a woman detective, who pluckily volunteered to act as a decoy.

For two or three nights she walked across the Common during the night hours, but nothing happened. Then at last came a night when something did. As she was sauntering past some bushes, like any young woman on her way home at the end of the evening, a man suddenly sprang out, aimed a vicious blow at her and thrust out a hand to clutch at the handbag tucked under her arm. The blow landed, but the woman detective, unheeding it, grabbed the man with both arms and called for the help she knew was not far away. The assailant made desperate efforts to break loose, and rained blow after blow on her. But the plucky girl held grimly on until her male colleagues came running up and completed the work of capture. The man went to prison, and the woman detective received a high commendation from the judge who sent him there.

These women detectives of the Yard are all of this stalwart, self-reliant type. And, as I have mentioned, they are one and all chosen for their ability, among other things, to carry disguise. Thus, with equal facility, they can take the parts of glamorous frequenters of high-spot hotels and clubs or of humble dwellers of the back streets, and play them faultlessly. They have to, for none is so quick to spot a fake than your professional crook, of either sex.

These women detectives have naturally played a big part in the successful activities of Scotland Yard's vice squad. Theirs has been the job of obtaining the evidence that has led to the prompt closing down of scores of the West End's most undesirable night joints.

Women police generally are becoming more and more necessary to the full efficient working of the Metropolitan Police organization, so that today the body that was once regarded rather as a curiosity of police work is frankly considered as an essential branch of the service.

The full establishment of the Metropolitan Women Police is 300—but that establishment is never up to its full number. The reason for this is that while there is never any dearth of young women who want to be detectives, few of them are anxious to serve first in the ranks of the uniformed branch. And as with the men, so with the women—it is a strict rule that every woman detective must first serve at least two years in the uniformed branch of the Force.

The women of that branch are mostly concerned with the assisting and protecting of women and children. It is useful work, and there is, as in every big city, plenty of it waiting to be done. In the course of their duties, naturally, the women police are called on to deal with a good deal of actual crime of one sort or another—that is, with its

prevention and detection—especially if children are involved either as offenders or victims.

Being a policewoman in uniform in London is no job for those of faint heart or faint physique, however. Quite frequently instances occur of women police sailing boldly in to the assistance of a male colleague having trouble in the arrest of some tough or other, or, as sometimes happens, finding his hands full with a hostile crowd on the edge of exploding into violence against the man in blue.

There is one member of the uniformed women police who is known to most officers attached to the Yard as "Half Pint". She got the nickname right at the beginning of her service because of the smallness of her stature. But what "Half Pint" lacks in inches she makes up for in sheer grit and pluck. In a London street not long ago, moving quietly along her beat, she became aware of sounds of strife not far off. Tracking the disturbance down, she found a slender male colleague in the throes of a desperate set-to with a burly ruffian who was plainly determined not to submit tamely to arrest—a ruffian who was, in fact, giving the officer a thoroughly bad time and who, as "Half Pint" saw, was liable to make an effective breakaway at any moment.

Little "Half Pint" gave one look and never hesitated. In she rushed to her male colleague's aid. The man he was seeking to hold, towering above her, looked down at this new attacker with something like amusement—and then began to aim a fair share of the savage blows he was raining on the policeman at her diminutive form.

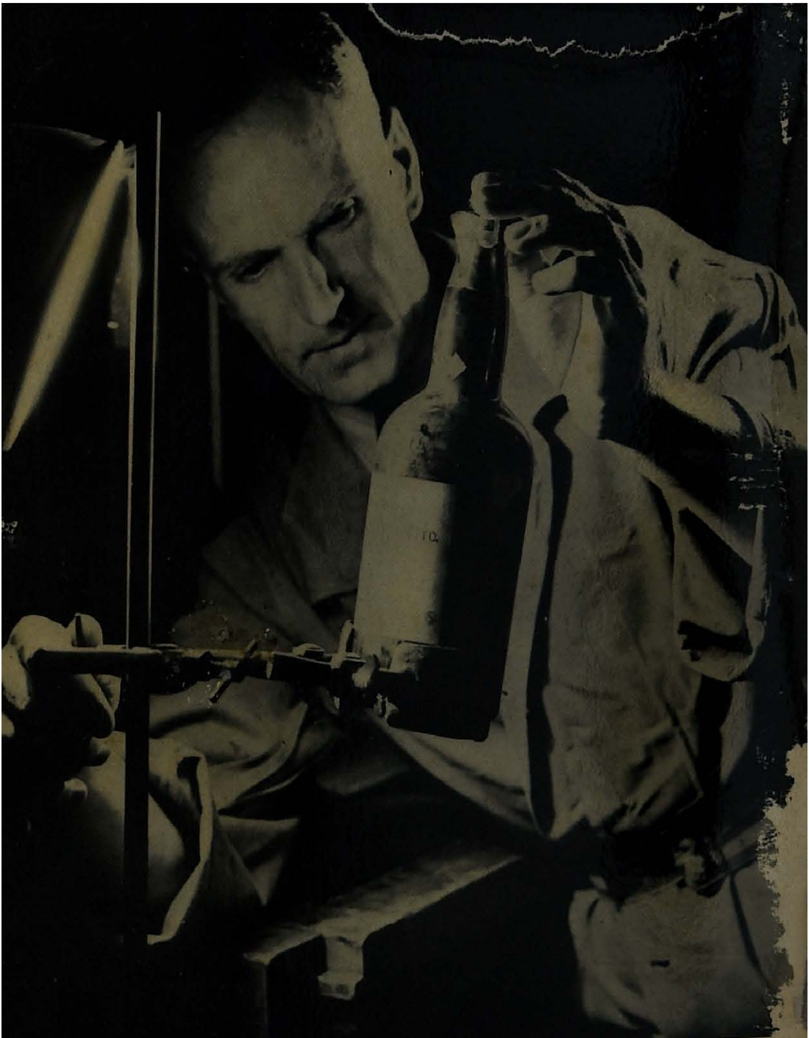
"Half Pint" took them—and ignored them—though they were blows designed to hurt considerably. Before the ruffian had realized just what was happening she had dropped to her knees and locked a firm grip about his legs. Then, calmly and coolly, she began to unlace first one of his boots and then the other. Moreover, she got those boots off his feet, and threw them far from her and him. There was sound method in that. Without his boots the man would be unable to run off very far, even should he manage to break free from the redoubled efforts of the male constable to hold him.

The next thing the startled tough discovered was that this little policewoman was quite tough in her own right. For, still disdaining his savage blows, she applied a sudden jiu-jitsu hold that brought him crashing to the ground. And she kept that hold while her male colleague found his handcuffs and secured the prisoner.

Jiu-jitsu is a thing every London policewoman learns during the eleven-weeks' course each must undergo at the police training school at Peel House. Part of this instruction is received in classes with men as fellow students, part in classes specially arranged for women only.

It is not every woman who can become a London policewoman. Stature does not matter so much, but absolute physical fitness does. In the main only unmarried applicants are considered, although some-

An officer taking finger-prints



In the Photographic Department. An officer photographing finger-prints on a bottle

times; if other qualifications are high, young widows are enrolled into the ranks.

The monetary rewards are not so very great. A young woman police constable starts at £4 14*s*. a week. This rises with length of service until her top pay as a constable is £5 17*s*. a week. If she graduates to the rank of sergeant she will get £6 15*s*. a week, rising in five years to £7 8*s*. And if, and when, she becomes an inspector she will receive from £410 to £510 a year.

Being a policewoman cannot be called a life of glamour. But then, as I explained previously, nearly all the young women who seek to become London policewomen have at the back of their minds the idea of graduating to the detective ranks. And in that field, if there is no glamour there is more certainly the lure of the unexpected and the thrill of adventure.

The war years planted that love of adventure pretty deeply in the hearts of countless young women of London, as elsewhere, and the cases I have narrated in this chapter show that service as a woman detective is a pretty good way of satisfying it.

I believe that in the near future the Yard's women officers are destined to play an even greater and more important part in the capital's police work than ever. At their head at the Yard is Superintendent Elizabeth C. Bather, who was appointed in 1946 after service as an officer in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, and who has at her command an organization capable of much fine work.

CHAPTER X

WOMEN CRIMINALS

To the student of crime there is no more fascinating subject for investigation and observation than that which deals with the woman criminal. It is a subject with many facets, and one which, however long and however deep the study, leaves many sociological riddles quite unsolved.

What mysterious urge, for instance, will suddenly turn a perfectly respectable, hard-working suburban housewife, with a good domestic background and a family she is bringing up as a credit to the neighbourhood, into a daring and highly successful burglar?

Or again, why should a young and pretty girl, living happily and contentedly at home with her comfortably circumstanced parents, suddenly blossom out as a cold-hearted blackmailer and reveal herself as an adept in trapping and rooking without scruple one victim after another?

The dossiers of women criminals who have fallen into the hands of Scotland Yard are studded with little mysteries of this kind. Rarely do the answers emerge. What the Yard experts will tell you, however, is that the average woman who takes to crime proves on the whole to be much cleverer at it than her male counterpart—smarter, and very often tougher and far more ruthless.

It is a fact that once a woman really takes to crime she will put all sentimentality behind her and tread the path she has chosen with no regret and no worry at all about possible consequences. When she is caught she will generally take her punishment with a cold heart and a disdainful shrug. She will then sit down to plot new coups with a cool brain and a quick and daring imagination that no male crook could hope to compete with.

Every year about 6,000 women are sent to gaol in Britain for various types of crime. In addition to that several thousand more are convicted and fined instead of being sent to prison. It is, however, certain that these figures are by no means an accurate reflection of how big a part women now play in Britain's daily crime pattern.

There are large numbers of women criminals in Britain today who play their cards so cleverly that they defeat all attempts to place them in the dock. There are probably thousands who escape detection altogether.

One reason for this, undoubtedly, is that whereas many women who have taken definitely to a life of crime work in association with established gangs of male crooks, a large number prefer to play a lone hand and work entirely on their own, sharing their secrets with no one. And, however it may be with her male counterpart, there is really

nothing about the outward appearance of a woman crook to mark her down as such. The stylishly dressed woman strolling down Bond Street or sauntering through the lounge of a West End hotel may be a well-circumstanced wife or a swindler or blackmailer of the deepest dye. The clear innocent eyes may mask an unusually wicked, scheming brain.

There are Yard detectives I know who shudder at the very thought of women crooks. Skilled questioners as they are, they know by experience how very difficult it is to get any real information from a woman crook even though she has fallen into their hands, for nine times out of ten she will lie and bluff her way so effectively through his maze of probings that at the end of it he will have hours of worry wondering whether, after all, he has not slipped up and made a wrong arrest. There's none of the male's traditional "It's a fair cop" acceptance of the situation about the average woman crook. Her guileless, or it may be tearful, eyes and unshakable denials will often tend to shake an experienced officer's belief in the accuracy of his own personal observations.

"Set a woman to catch a woman" has come to be accepted at the Yard as a sound maxim. A woman detective's natural intuition and ability to read the mind of another woman have led to the trapping of a good many woman crooks after all efforts by male detectives have failed lamentably.

Many a woman has taken to the path of downright crime when there has apparently been not the slightest reason for her to do anything of the kind. Many a woman with a good home and a decent husband, many a daughter of well-to-do parents, has given up everything she has hitherto known to follow criminal paths simply because she could not resist the lure of what she has conceived to be real adventure. Many another of more humble origin has slipped away from rectitude to pose, with effectiveness and transitory profit, as a rich heiress or young woman of title. In such cases as this the cause has usually been an irresistible urge to get into the limelight, whatever the ultimate consequences might be.

Every year hundreds of women are convicted of shop-lifting. Most of them are ordinary housewives who succumb to some sudden temptation. There are, however, professional shoplifters, and it is these who give the Yard most trouble. Shoplifting is, perhaps, the most profitable form of female crime. Every year the professionals manage to get away with thousands of pounds' worth of loot. These women work as a rule in gangs of four or five. Their coups are planned down to the last detail, and those plans are carried out with a daring and effrontery no band of male crooks would dream of attempting. Often the women wear specially made clothes, such as double skirts or other garments with large and skilfully disguised pockets into which all kinds of articles can be dropped and concealed until the thief is well away from the shop being looted.

I know of one gang of London shop thieves each member of which made a comfortable living for years before they were rounded up and sent to prison. Their scheme was to raid, in succession, shops in various parts of London. Then, for a time, they would give London a rest, concentrating on shops and towns within a hundred-miles radius of the capital. Then they would descend on towns in the Midlands and even farther afield. London always remained their headquarters. In whatever town they were working they would meet at a railway-station cloakroom, pack their loot away into suit-cases which had earlier been deposited there, and re-enter the capital in the guise of ordinary travellers from the Provinces.

One of the worst of the London gangs of women crooks became known as the "Forty Elephants". It acquired this title for two reasons. One was that most of the members lived in the famous "Elephant and Castle" district on the south side of the river. The other was that many of them were women well above average height, some being nearly six feet tall.

This gang operated for many years. Most of its original members, including its founder—a notorious woman crook known to the London underworld as "Diamond Annie"—have long since become too old to carry on active "work" in it. But they were succeeded by young and even more resolute women crooks whose activities periodically provided a fresh headache for Scotland Yard's crime chiefs.

The "Forty Elephants" had a definite line of their own. They specialized in blackmailing young crooks. Particularly the young crooks whose hunting-grounds were the West End clubs and smart hotel lounges. They had an uncanny knack of finding out just what "jobs" were being pulled off, who was in them, and just what the loot amounted to. Even the young male crook working on his own and fondly believing that what he was up to was his own secret would wake up one day with a shock to the realization that his activities were as an open book to this band of tough, heartless women.

The "Elephants" would not beat about the bush. They would come along with a blunt demand for a percentage of the loot this or that young male crook had managed to acquire by his roguery—and the gang's knowledge of just what that loot really amounted to would prove to be startling in its accuracy. Failure to hand over the demanded percentage would bring threats that he would be given away to the police. If he just laughed at that the young crook would find the "Elephants" had another and much better card to play. One night he would be waylaid—spirited away—and then calmly and coldly beaten up. And beaten-up much more savagely and effectively than by any gang of male toughs. That beating-up usually produced not a percentage but all the loot the young crook had amassed, plus any personal possessions of value he might be wearing or have about him. He might howl for mercy until he was black in the face. But he would by now

find that these forty furies had no knowledge of the word. The "Elephants" became a gang to be feared even worse that the police in London's underworld.

They by no means confined their activities to preying on young male crooks. They were not above doing a spot of well-planned shop-lifting from some of the West End luxury stores. But blackmail was their main line. Some of the women were really attractive under the bright lights of London's night life. They would act as decoys for the netting of some luckless young visitor with money to burn. Once hooked he would either become a victim for straight old-fashioned blackmail or be enticed to a spot where other members of the gang could beat hm up and rob him at their leisure.

In the Yard records are the dossiers of quite a number of women who have turned to burglary—and who have become quite expert at the craft. There was one who, caught red-handed, blandly confessed to having committed more than 300 burglaries in the area surrounding the small town on the outskirts of the capital where she lived with her husband—a most respectable artisan. She had lived in that area all her life and to all intents and purposes was just an average, hard-working housewife, taking great pride in her little home, shopping with her neighbours every day, paying her bills and having apparently no other interest in life than the daily round of the industrious and contented woman of the suburbs. Just what made her sally forth in the night hours while her husband was at work, or just what she did with her loot, was never discovered.

There was another woman burglar whose case I followed who boldly carried out more than a hundred burglaries in the West End before an unlucky slip on a high roof-ledge led to her capture. She was an attractive girl, living in good style in a West End flat, and none who knew her ever suspected that she was a female "Raffles". But that slip during a police chase put paid to a career that had been unusually daring. She fell and badly sprained her ankle, and a searching policeman found her lying in pain on a roof-top—with no fewer than twenty-seven skeleton keys in a neat pocket of her slacks. When her flat was searched the police found more than £4,000 worth of stolen property carefully stored away.

One of the most dangerous types of woman criminal is the one who poses as a domestic servant. She will produce faked references, get a job, stay a few days, and then decamp with every scrap of jewellery she can lay hands on. There was one woman finally brought to book by the Yard, the thirty-three-year-old mother of four children, who made as much as £1,000 a year by slick work of this kind. Every one of the women who employed her joined in describing her as the model domestic servant.

Where women crooks are linked up with male gangs they are employed for the most part as scouts, being known in crooks' parlance as "drummers". Their job is to call at a house and, on some pretext or

other, get the lie of the land. Then, while other members of the gang lie in waiting, a second call is made at the house at an hour which, if the scout be up to her job, will be one when the family is out. That circumstance being established, the male members of the gang will effect slick entry, the scout meanwhile keeping watch outside and remaining ready either to give warning or, should a quick getaway become necessary, to do whatever she can to delay pursuit in the guise of an innocent passer-by. A woman's wit can work quickly and effectively in such circumstances.

Or again, a woman member of a gang will often be sent to West End jewellery or fur shops to spy out the land in preparation for some projected coup. She will as likely as not be quite an expert at assessing the value of the jewels and furs in view, and when the moment comes to strike may even go out on the job with the thieves—to guide them in the selection of the most valuable loot.

There were two women—one the mother of two children and the wife of a sadly crippled husband, the other the wife of a most respectable tradesman—who, forming a partnership of two, carried on robberies in all parts of London for three long years before they were finally caught. Their method was very simple, but very effective. They worked, too, in broad daylight. All they did was to sally forth with an empty pram. With this they would move sedately enough down some residential road until they came to a likely-looking house. Then one of the women would knock boldly at the door. If it was answered she would have some harmless inquiry to make. If, however, there was no reply to her knock her companion would slip quietly and quickly round to the back, break a pane of glass, gain entry and steal all she could lay hands on. This loot would be stored swiftly away under the pram covers, and the two would innocently wheel the pram away. As I say, they worked that cool little game for three long years before being caught.

Female Fagins have become a real menace in the London crime picture. Hardened to crime themselves, these women have not the slightest scruple in training youths and young girls—even schoolgirls—to become professional thieves.

There have been dashing young women crooks who have excelled as car-drivers for gangs of smash-and-grab raiders. That is a job requiring quick wits and cold nerve, and these women have shown they have possessed those qualities in a high degree.

Alert thinking and sheer audacity are indeed the hallmarks of the true woman crook. Here is an illustrative case in point. A woman burglar who had given the police a good deal of trouble was surprised one night by a householder who awoke to find her rifling his spare bedroom. She burst into tears, told him a harrowing story of her troubles, and pleaded that he forgive her and let her go, vowing she would never again offend. He was sorry for her and agreed to regard the incident as closed in return for her solemn promise to go straight in future.

She wiped away her tears and wanly smiled her gratitude, and the householder escorted her downstairs, opened the front door and bade her "Good night". Demurely the girl echoed his words. "Good night, sir," she said, "and God bless you," and she moved off into the darkness. The householder did not notice the small bag she had picked up in the hall as she crossed the threshold. It contained a nice little haul of silverware and jewellery which the woman had collected from the downstairs rooms before trying her luck upstairs. And she had walked off with it under his very nose.

This particular crook, when on another occasion she was surprised by the owner of a house she was burgling, took unhesitatingly a flying leap through a window, dashed into another house, climbed through a skylight on to the roof and, after a series of breathless acrobatics, leaped a distance of twenty feet into an area, from which she darted to freedom.

Yes, women criminals are very, very difficult to deal with. For one thing they are quite unpredictable. For another they possess a natural plausibility, and the fact that they are women makes them less likely to arouse suspicion in the minds of their intended victims.

They are highly successful. I recall a thirty-year-old woman who had a child of eight to which she was passionately devoted, and whose friends regarded her as a model mother. Perhaps she was, so far as externals go. But a detective friend of mine did not hesitate to describe her also as one of the cleverest and most persistent hotel thieves in the whole of London.

She was fond of dressing well—and always bought her raiment at the most fashionable West End establishments. When she was arrested on one occasion for stealing jewellery worth thousands of pounds from various front-rank hotels it was found she possessed no fewer than five very expensive fur coats. The one she wore in the dock had, indeed, been purchased only three days before for a sum of some hundreds of pounds.

This woman had managed to carry on her little game for two years before being finally laid by the heels. Simplicity was the keynote of her method, a method which never varied. It was boldy to enter an hotel, make her way without hesitation to the upstairs rooms, slip into some bedroom the door of which happened to be open, and take pot luck with what she could find.

And she found plenty. Jewel cases and handbags were what her quick eyes always sought. Once she had them she was out of the room in a flash, and into a bathroom down the corridor. There she would remove jewels from their cases and money and other contents from handbags, which she would then hide. Then she would boldly sally forth again—just a well-dressed woman hotel guest, going about her ordinary occasions.

Just to be on the safe side, she had a little plan designed to throw any chance suspicion off the beam. Thus she might enter the bathroom a blonde and emerge from it a definite brunette. She was an adept in

the use of false hair. When she was arrested various types of hair—some in curls, some in ringlets, some just straight, all designed to be slipped swiftly into position under her hat—were found in her flat. Those scraps of hair had helped her net some £7,000 worth of jewellery in a month or two.

Then there was the woman with a penchant for names. She specialized in fraud, and she had no fewer than fifteen quite different aliases. Most of them were high-sounding titles, some indeed being the real names of actually titled folk. For sheer audacity the case of a smart little London typist of but nineteen would be hard to beat. She posed as an heiress, met a wealthy man who proposed to her and thought she was going to marry him, and ended by fleecing him of several thousand pounds.

A London woman crook really deserving a niche of her own was one who specialized in working with a skilful conjurer as a confederate. Her method was to persuade a man to allow her to tell him his fortune. From the moment of agreement with this naive proposal the victim would be lost. For in the course of the fortune-telling the woman would presently take his hand and hold it over her fluttering heart, and while that was happening her conjurer confederate would be deftly extracting anything of value from the dupe's pockets. Many bank cashiers and country-town tradesmen were duped in this fashion, hard-headed business men though they might be. Not one of them discovered any loss until the woman and her confederate were well out of the way. One reason for this might be that during the fortune-telling the victim would be directed to look straight into the woman's eyes. And they were very, very beautiful eyes, mesmeric in their effect on country business men.

That mesmeric quality, indeed, might explain the success of a variation of the trick this siren and her partner occasionally brought off. This was to get the victim to place his hand, holding a sheaf of banknotes, over his own heart, and then to gaze into those wonderful eyes. Incredible as it may seem, it would only be some time afterwards that the victim would realize those banknotes had completely vanished. Exactly how the money left the victim's hand was never satisfactorily explained, and I have spoken to detectives who by no means scoffed at the theory that the woman actually did possess some kind of mesmeric gift.

The description of her as beautiful, by the way, is an official one. It was used in the descriptions issued by Scotland Yard for circulation throughout Britain when the detectives finally got on her trail. One last point about this beautiful thief. Men were her only victims. Women never, for some reason, fell under her spell.

There was one woman crook who delighted to pose as a Scotland Yard detective. Her story, usually, was that she was engaged in tracking down two foreign criminals, and she managed to get away with quite

a lot of "borrowed" money in this way. Once she actually "borrowed" a Rolls-Royce car in which to chase some mythical crooks through the Hampshire lanes to Southampton.

There was the fashionable little lady whose delight it was to stay at smart hotels in the guise of an heiress shortly coming into the handy little sum of £20,000 a year—a story which a surprising number of people about her believed. Their pocket-books and bank accounts were safe enough, however, if they were men. All she was after was the jewellery of any women who happened to be staying in the hotel. Her method of getting possession of that was all her own.

What she did, when she was ready to pounce, was to start a little but very smoky fire on one of the flights of stairs, and then see that the alarm was raised. That would bring the hotel guests out of their rooms in fine haste. Our little lady would then act with swiftness and sureness. She would nip into a room here and a room there, knowing exactly what she was looking for, and just where to look, snapping up worth-while trinkets with a decision that spoke volumes for the thoroughness of her own intelligence work. And she would be off and away before anyone realized what had really happened.

The woman "fence", or receiver, is a definite figure of the London underworld, and she has shown herself to be every whit as cunning and determined in this dangerous occupation as any male "fence" has ever been.

Some little while ago, in the "Elephant and Castle" area of Southwark, I inspected some premises which had been the haunt of a twenty-seven-year-old woman receiver who had just been arrested. The place was ostensibly a dress shop and the woman had built up quite a little reputation in the neighbourhood for her quiet ways, her straight dealing and her genial friendliness to one and all.

In point of fact she had for years been acting as receiver for no fewer than five notorious gangs of thieves, and when the police swooped on her premises one day they found thousands of pounds' worth of stolen goods hidden cunningly between the boards of a double floor and in secret double cupboards the existence of which could never ordinarily have been suspected.

The woman had gone about her illicit trading in thorough business-like fashion. She had kept ledgers of all the goods that had passed through her hands. They had been entered as legitimate purchases. The police found, however, that every entry carried a faked name and address and that trading firms mentioned in these ledgers were entirely non-existent.

That woman fence had had a long run, during which she had dealt with some of the toughest characters in the whole of London's underworld. To do that successfully means she had unusual qualities of shrewdness and toughness herself.

CHAPTER XI

IN SCOTLAND YARD'S BATTLE HEADQUARTERS

THE crooks of the London underworld have one great dread—a haunting spectre that never leaves them for a second whenever they are out on a job of burglary, warehouse-breaking or the like. It is the knowledge that working against them, unseen yet all-powerful, is the modern wonder of crime-fighting—Scotland Yard's "999" System.

One finger sets it in motion. All that it is necessary for that finger to do is to dial thrice the figure "9" on an ordinary telephone, in private house or public call-box. Thereafter, things happen with astonishing speed.

One of the things is that within a minute or two as many as sixty fast cars slipping quietly through the London streets can if necessary be diverted and unleashed to hurtle on the track of the suspects whose activities have caused that initial alarm to be raised.

Just what happens when someone dials "999" is perhaps best answered by paying an imaginary visit to Scotland Yard's battle headquarters—officially known as the Information Room. It is the nerve centre of the Yard's crime-fighting machine.

Housed in a semi-basement under the new war-time-built premises that adjoin the older Scotland Yard buildings on the Embankment, the Information Room is lit day and night by fluorescent tubes, and as much as anything reminds one of the war-time battle headquarters of the Royal Air Force.

A place where quiet reigns, this Information Room—quiet that is deceptive. Four large tables stand in the centre and on each of them is spread a section of the map that covers the whole 700 square miles of the Metropolitan Police district. That map shows every street, every by-way, every little alley in the whole area.

Now each of the four maps, lying flat on its table, is divided into a number of zones. Dotted about here and there are small metal squares with metal rings—rather like serviette rings—either encircling or lying beside them. To the left of each map-table are a number of small boxes beneath which are a series of red lights. Beneath these boxes sit police officers, each of whom is a specially trained telephonist, wearing headphones and waiting, quietly alert, for a call. To their right sit four more officers, each with a message pad, and not far away are two further officers, one seated in front of a microphone and the other wearing headphones. A large cabinet switchboard, with scores of twinkling red and green lights, is fixed to the wall. Beside this switchboard is a doorway leading to a slightly smaller room in which sit policemen

operating the teleprinter and telephone system that links up instantaneously with every one of London's 173 police-stations.

There is nothing whatever dramatic or spectacular about the lay-out of the place. The average visitor would find it extremely commonplace, in fact. There is no noise, no bustle, no excitement. The officers seem to go about their work in a quiet, unhurried fashion that would strike the layman as rather casual. But, as I have said, the air of quiet and apparent unconcern is one of the most deceptive things in all London. For when that organization slips smoothly into action it is geared to ensure that not a split second of time is wasted.

From this Information Room is operated the whole of Scotland Yard's vast communications system. Within a few seconds the officers in it can be in touch with the whole fleet of patrolling area cars, the police launches nosing their way on the waters of the Thames, with every police-station throughout London and if need be throughout Britain, and with the headquarters of the International Police Commission in Paris, which in turn will radio Scotland Yard's messages to police forces throughout the world.

Incidentally, more than fifty high-powered area cars and ten River Police launches are fitted with amplified modulating two-way radio telephonic equipment. Numbers of "Q" cars—the fast police vehicles disguised as tradesmen's vans, private cars and the like—are similarly equipped for two-way talking with the Yard. Those "Q" cars, apparently innocent-looking vehicles, even with dilapidated bonnets, have high-powered engines and are mostly used for the shadowing of mobile gangs. Their crews seldom disclose their identities or stop a suspect. They just watch and wait. When they are sure they are on the right track they wireless their information back to the Information Room and one of the ordinary wireless cars is promptly directed to the area to pounce on the suspects. Whereupon the camouflaged "Q" car simply fades away into the London traffic, its function entirely unsuspected.

Messages sent out from the Information Room by the Creed teleprinter system come under three categories. They can be sent to all stations simultaneously, to any of the four London areas individually, or to stations in a divisional group.

Messages for the Flying Squad are not sent out from the Information Room. This Squad works with entire independence and the crews of its cars receive their messages by Morse from their own independent headquarters transmitter.

It is only recently that wireless telephony has been installed in Scotland Yard's patrol cars—years after the United States police forces had adopted the system. This was not because of any slackness on the part of the Scotland Yard authorities in adopting up-to-date ideas. There were technical difficulties. One problem that had to be overcome was that of finding a wireless system that would ensure

perfectly clear reception throughout the whole of the London area and which would overcome the risk of interference caused by the hills with which London is ringed about, and which would at the same time be one capable of operation without fear of outsiders overhearing the details of confidential messages.

The last very important consideration has been fully safeguarded. The wave-length used by the Information Room is one of the Yard's most closely guarded secrets. An extremely high frequency is used, and risk of interference has been almost entirely eliminated. The sets used in the police cars are of special design and once again represent a Scotland Yard top secret. Without knowing the details of these sets no crook has the slightest chance of listening in to any Information Room broadcasts. Fitted with the latest frequency-modulated equipment, these sets give the last word in clear reception. Each car carries its set in the boot, and should it become faulty during a patrol it can be taken to any police-station in the Metropolitan area and promptly changed for another.

The two-way wireless telephone system has been found a great advance on any previous system. One advantage of its use is that every person in a car fitted with it is able to hear all the messages directly as they are transmitted from the Information Room at Scotland Yard. Drivers, hearing the messages like this, can accelerate and turn in the direction indicated even while the message is still coming through without waiting for it to be ended. And in a car chase after crooks the smallest possible fraction of time saved counts a lot.

Another point is that operators for radio telephony can be trained completely in three days, and can if necessary be swiftly replaced by fresh men. Against this operators in Morse telegraphy require many months of training to bring them to the required pitch of expertness.

I might here explain that, in the case of Flying Squad cars, which are equipped with Morse, it is not so vital for them to be as quick off the mark as the area patrol cars, since they are usually engaged in carrying out their own independent inquiries and working on their own information transmitted, as I have explained, from their own Yard headquarters. Incidentally, the Squad men can receive a message from the Yard but cannot transmit a message to the Yard from their vehicles. If they want to report back to the Yard or to ask for further amplifying information they must leave their car and seek a telephone.

In point of fact, only some eighty of Scotland Yard's 793 vehicles are fitted with wireless. With the exception of a small group of "Accident Flying Squad" cars, which can be directed by the Information Room to the scenes of serious accidents or to spots where a serious traffic hold-up has either already occurred or is threatening to occur, the Yard's traffic patrol cars are not fitted with wireless.

These cars belong to the traffic branch and are financed by the Ministry of Transport for the special task of detecting any traffic

offences. Although the crews are Metropolitan policemen they take little or no part in the fighting of actual crime.

Now let us see what happens when an ordinary member of the public—returning home from a visit to a West End theatre, say, and finding his house has been burgled, or seeing suspects behaving suspiciously at a house a couple of doors away from his own—does what he has been urged to do in such an eventuality and dials "999".

Response is immediate. It comes first from the telephone exchange in the shape of a calm, matter-of-fact voice, asking him which service he is requiring—police, fire or accident ambulance. His reply is "Police", and in an instant his call is through to the Information Room at the Yard.

On the big switchboard there a red light glows. Back to the caller comes the quiet voice of the policeman receiving the call, asking his name and address. As the caller gives it the Yard man writes it down swiftly on his message pad and passes the slip to a colleague, who is also listening with headphones strapped to his head. This second officer glances at the address, swiftly removes his headphones and moves across to the table on which is spread out the map embracing the particular area the caller is 'phoning from. In an instant he has picked up a red ring and dropped it over one of the metal discs lying on the map. That disc represents the Yard car that is at that moment patrolling the roads nearest to the caller's home. And the red ring which now embraces the disc indicates that from now on that particular car is engaged on a job.

On the slip the officer now writes the number of the car. Then, without saying a word, he passes the slip to the officer who is seated before the microphone. He leans towards it and begins to read his message. Something like this! "M.T.S.Y. Message 261 begins. Private house Laburnum Grove broken into."

Now, this policeman announcer has preceded his message simply by giving the Yard's secret call sign and a code signal indicating that the message he is about to transmit is intended for one special car and one only. He has not emulated the American police with their "Calling all cars" summons to attention. But every man in every one of the half-hundred or more patrolling Yard cars, in all parts of London, will be listening. They will be straining at attention from the first sound of that secret call sign coming over the air. In a few seconds they will hear the code sign that indicates the message is for one particular car and one alone, and will relax.

As for the one particular car, that carrying the number on the little disc back in the Information Room, the driver of that will have spun his wheel and started off on the shortest way to Laburnum Grove almost before the announcer's voice has ended its message. All this will have been happening even before the caller who has dialled "999" has ended his talk with the Yard. As the car speeds on its way

through the London streets the announcer's voice will be heard again, giving further details of the crime that has been, or perhaps still is being, committed.

The average time one of these patrol cars takes to get to any designated point in its area is no more than three minutes. That is the outside limit. It will probably be in no more than two minutes from the time it swung off at the announcer's direction that the car will be pulling up at the door of the Laburnum Grove house. The householder may not even have finished his telephone talk to the Yard. It often happens that cars answering "999" summonses arrive in time to catch crooks red-handed at their work.

In any case, the element of speed, so vital in crime-fighting, is there. The crew of the car, remember, are in constant wireless telephonic touch with the Yard. They can report back instantly, have the surrounding areas combed by other cars, throw a quick cordon round any specified area and, so to speak, seal up the fleeing crooks in it.

Meanwhile, other cars of the half hundred will be getting similar messages calling each off to some assignment or other—a fight outside a public-house here, a couple of suspects loitering near the shadowed doors of a warehouse there.

The bulk of "999" calls refer to stolen cars, suspicious characters spotted lurking in doorways or trying to climb over garden walls, or miscreants seen attempting to break into shops or warehouses. There is an average of more than 77,000 calls of all types passing through the Information Room every year, and more than 60,000 of them come from private individuals giving information about burglaries or suspected crimes, which demonstrates, of course, how splendidly the Yard's policy of enlisting the aid of the average law-abiding citizen has borne fruit. The number of arrests made by the crews of wireless cars acting directly on messages received from the Information Room is over 5,000 a year.

Generally speaking, each of these cars will operate only in its own particular area, and its exact position at any given moment will always be known and charted in the Information Room. If all cars in a particular area are engaged on assignments and one more message is received calling for action, a car may be brought into service from some other area which is not at that moment being so hard pressed.

When something really serious happens, such as a chase of car bandits or smash-and-grab raiders racing through London—it may be in some stolen car—then all of the Yard's patrol cars may be warned to take part in the hunt. This message will be an "A.S." (All Stations) one and it will swing into action against some fleeing band of desperadoes the swiftest moving force of mobile police crime-fighting has ever known.

With all this, however, it is interesting to bear in mind that this motor patrol system is mainly used as a deterrent to mobile criminals;

that is, crooks who operate with cars. The patrols are not intended in any way to supplement the work of the foot policeman patrolling his beat. There is nothing, according to police experts, to better the work of the regular patrolling policeman "pounding his beat", able to wander around and poke his nose into all sorts of likely, and unlikely, corners. A policeman attached to a local station recognizes at a glance strangers in his locality. The average thief realizes the fact, and for this and similar reasons fears the local uniformed officer on the beat far more than all the Yard's patrol wireless cars. He realizes readily enough that the crew of the car patrol, travelling through the streets, see really very little of what is going on save the really obvious.

Nevertheless, although the majority of the arrests they make are for offences of a minor character, the crews of these patrol cars are playing a fine part in the Yard's crime-fighting organization. Through their work what may be called the incidence of ordinary everyday crime has been cut down a good deal. The patrol cars have, of course, always been on hand to play their part in the capture of more serious offenders such as gunmen and motor bandits of various kinds.

The crews of the cars have been involved in many highly dramatic pursuits. Chases after bandits in headlong flight have ended in crashes and death, sometimes of the bandits, and sometimes—though not often, fortunately—of innocent pedestrians the bandits have not been able to avoid running down.

By special permission of the Commissioner, Sir Harold Scott, I was able to join one of the cars for a patrol one night. Nothing, I think, can better illustrate the type of work that is done than my own log of that patrol. The car was 6–G, a big black saloon with a wireless aerial swinging from the roof—for no special efforts are made to disguise these wireless patrol cars, unlike those of the Flying Squad and the "Q" force. We had a crew of three—a driver and a wireless operator in uniform, and, in the rear seat, an officer wearing plain clothes, his job being that of observer—a job in which he can if necessary leave the vehicle and keep unobtrusive watch on a suspect from a pavement vantage point.

The car in which I rode, 6–G, was stationed at Bow Street, the headquarters of "E" Division. My log book starts as we drove out of the station yard. Like this:

8.1. Moved off to our section, extending from the Embankment to Euston Railway Station and from there to the Angel, Islington. Wireless operator snaps down his switch and reports to the Information that 6–G is on patrol.

8.5. A voice comes from the Information Room, clear and distinct: "2–Q—Green van, believed to contain thieves with suspected stolen property—investigate." This message is not for us but for one of the Yard's cars disguised as a tradesman's van which operate only on secret missions.

8.20.—Message for all cars. The voice gives a description of a car stolen in Canterbury and believed to be making for London.

8.22.—Description of another car stolen in Canterbury.

8.41.—A message for 6–G (us): "Thieves reported in factory in Islington—investigate."

8.43.—Our car, and another, arrive at the scene of the suspected crime. Crews of both cars post themselves at strategic points, and the building is entered by some of the officers. Soon, two men are brought out, struggling violently. Back from our car goes the message to the Information Room: "Two men arrested—awaiting transport."

8.54.—A van arrives from neighbouring police-station, our call for transport having been answered in two minutes. The two men are taken away.

9.0. We resume our patrol, cruising around looking for suspicious incidents. Listen in to message sent to other patrolling cars in different parts of London.

9.25.—Another message for us: "Passer-by reports seeing two men breaking in at the rear of a block of flats."

9.27. We arrive at the flats, see two men apparently forcing an entry by way of a window. Questioning reveals that one of them was trying to get into his own flat, having lost his key.

9.40. Cruising. As we slow up near small groups outside all-night coffee stalls a number of men and women fade away into the night. Suspects—but we let them slip off—tonight.

10.40. Still cruising. Plenty of messages from Information Room, but none for us.

So it went on throughout the night hours. I had, it seemed, chosen a quiet night for my trip out in 6–G, for there were no dramatic chases after fleeing car bandits or fights with masked burglars. But there might well have been—and there was always that quiet voice coming from the microphone in the Information Room with urgent instructions for other patrolling cars.

Seldom, by the way, are any ordinary conversations carried on over the two-way wireless telephones. The instructions from the Information Room go out in messages following definite stereotyped lines and are recorded in that way in the log book each car carries. The replies from the cars are dealt with in exactly the same fashion.

The busiest hours for the patrol cars are those between 8 p.m. and 1 a.m. For some reason, the present-day burglar hates to operate in the hours immediately before dawn. Neither does he like working on rainy nights—many a burglary has been called off because of a rainy downpour that had "set in for the night", never mind how much prior planning and observation had been put in.

The crews of the patrol cars are mainly young men, chosen for their qualities of dash and quick resource. Many served during the late war in one or other of the Services and find in this new life new

and adventurous thrills. Certainly it is a life when the unexpected may pop up at any moment—announced by that quiet, modulated voice coming over the loudspeaker from the Information Room on the Embankment.

How these young men of the mobile patrol are prepared to tackle any emergency was shown not long ago when a bandit car which had been chased across half London swerved when the driver, in headlong flight at seventy miles an hour, wrenched round his wheel to make a sudden turn and found his vehicle hurtling into the River Thames at Hammersmith.

There were two bandits in that car beside the driver, and all three, dazed and exhausted, gave themselves up for lost as the cold waters of the river enveloped them. But on their heels was the pursuing patrol car. With a screech of brakes this pulled up, and without hesitation the young officers forming its crew piled out and plunged in to the rescue. One by one the three half-drowned bandits were brought back to dry land. All the fight in them was gone. In its place was real gratitude to the men who had saved them from a watery end, and it was gratitude these desperate men were not at all slow in expressing.

Adventure? The Information Room, with all its quiet and orderly atmosphere, is full of it, all hidden away in such prosaic report-book entries as this:

3.48.—Epping—message from police-station reporting that car XYZ 231425 containing suspected thieves left bound for London.

3.49. Wireless message to all cars.

5.10. Crew at 7–B saw wanted car at High Street, Uxbridge. Driver refused to stop when signalled. Chase went on for eight minutes.

5.18. Wanted car rammed in Southall area, and brought to standstill. Occupants, three men and a woman, arrested.

Yes, the Yard's system of high-speed motor patrols has been developed to a fine pitch of perfection. And it all started in 1935, with a small wireless transmitter at Scotland Yard sending our Morse messages to a mere handful of cars belonging to the Flying Squad of those days.

CHAPTER XII

THE SPECIAL BRANCH

THEY call the officers of the Special Branch the Yard's "Hush-Hush Men". That is because their activities are seldom brought to light in open court. And it is a fact that this group of the Yard's detectives is the nearest thing to Continental secret police organizations Britain has.

It is the job of the men of the Special Branch to deal with all political investigations, keep tabs on the plottings of subversive organizations of British or alien origin, guard Cabinet Ministers and other notabilities, catch foreign spies and handle other delicate matters of police work over which a curtain of secrecy must necessarily be kept.

It was during the Irish dynamite campaign of the eighteen-eighties that the Branch was first established, a number of picked officers being selected from the Yard's personnel of that time to form what was at first called the Special Irish Branch.

The work of these first members was clear cut and single-purposed. It was to search out and investigate Irish-American dynamite plots, carry out inquiries for the Government in Dublin and keep a watchful eye on the comings and goings of certain Irish-American suspects. Those first members were either all Irish or of Irish origin.

They did good work in highly dangerous circumstances and, in 1886, were placed on a permanent footing as members of a separate and distinct branch of the Criminal Investigation Department. In that year it had become necessary to make the Special Irish Branch a water-tight, self-reliant body, for there were fears that a bomb outrage was being plotted to mar the celebrations of Queen Victoria's Jubilee—a dynamite explosion in Westminster Abbey during the Royal service was, it was believed, being planned. To find out all about this plot, and to scotch it, was the job given to those first Special Branch men, and to carry it out they had obviously to be allowed to work unfettered by the ordinary police rules and regulations of that day.

From then until just before the last war the officers of the Branch were chiefly concerned with general security arrangements during Royal celebrations, with providing bodyguards for Cabinet Ministers and with keeping in close touch with all political movements in the country regarded as likely to foment subversive trouble. They had in their ranks expert shorthand writers who could attend "revolutionary" meetings and take notes of inflammable utterances, and they were able to keep the Home Secretary and the organization known as M.I.5—the Military Intelligence body that deals with counter-espionage—well informed of

the activities of organizations and individuals regarded as likely to be dangerous to the State.

Just before the late war the personnel of the Branch was increased to a strength of some 200 men. What its strength is today is a close-kept secret. Every member is selected for his educational attainments. He must be an expert shorthand-writer and able to speak at least one foreign language. In point of fact, many of the members of the Branch are fluent linguists speaking five, six and even more tongues. But their pay is the same as that of any ordinary detective of the Criminal Investigation Department.

Few, if any, of the Special Branch men look like policemen, or even detectives. Many of them wear soft collars and sports jackets, though others might be taken for ordinary business men. In going about their daily work they are given a good deal of freedom and are not subject to anything like the strict discipline that is imposed on other Yard detectives.

The present chief of the Special Branch is Deputy Commander Leonard Burt, a keen-faced man of neat appearance who, during the war, proved to be one of Britain's most notable spy-catchers. During those years he was attached to M.I.5 with the rank of lieutenant-colonel, and when the war ended he was made head of the Special Branch so that liaison between the two organizations could be facilitated.

Burt was the man who arrested William ("Lord Haw-haw") Joyce, the traitor who broadcast from Germany during the war. When he was made head of the Special Branch in 1946 he was still engaged on investigations into atom bomb secrets in Canada. Those inquiries were widespread, embracing Britain, Canada and the United States, and they culminated, five days after Burt's appointment to his new post, in his arrest of the atom expert Dr. Alan Nunn May, who subsequently received a sentence of ten years' penal servitude at the Old Bailey.

It was Burt who went to South Africa to help the South African Government perfect security arrangements for the protection of the King and Queen and the two Princesses during the Royal Tour of 1947. His task after that was the building up of a formidable organization designed to counter the activities in Britain of Palestine terrorists.

The normal bodyguards of members of the Royal Family are provided by "A" Division of the uniformed branch of the Metropolitan Police, in which area the Royal palaces are situated. Senior officers are selected for the work, and they live at Buckingham Palace with a section of the uniformed branch, the members of which perform normal police duties both inside and outside the Royal residence.

The men of the Special Branch, however, have direct responsibility for the guarding of Britain's Cabinet Ministers. They are armed—being, incidentally, the only detectives of Scotland Yard who *are* permanently armed—and are with the Ministers to whom they have been assigned day and night. There have been many cases where a Cabinet

Minister has intimated in no uncertain fashion that he does not require the services of a bodyguard. The protest has been courteously listened to and noted—and the Minister has had his bodyguard just the same, though he may perhaps never be aware of the fact.

Special Branch men detailed to guard Cabinet Ministers sometimes stay with them for years. The Minister may temporarily go out of office, in which case the detective may be given the job of guarding his successor. But it is fairly certain that on his former charge's return to office one of the latter's first acts will be to ask again for the services of the man whose task it was to watch over his safety, and such a request is always acceded to.

For many years of his political career Mr. Winston Churchill had as his personal bodyguard Inspector Thompson. Some years before the outbreak of the last war Thompson retired from the Force, but one of the first acts of Mr. Churchill when he assumed the Premiership in the dark days of 1940 was to ask for special arrangements to be made so that Thompson could rejoin the Force and once again become his "shadow".

A Special Branch man who takes up a job of this kind has anything but an easy, simple time. There is little or no leisure during his waking hours. He must be with his charge all day and every day, staying discreetly within a yard or two all the time and not dreaming of going off duty until the Minister has returned safely to his own home for the night. That often means being on the go constantly from early morning until midnight or later.

There was one former Cabinet Minister who kept his guard on the go right throughout the entire twenty-four hours. This Minister was convinced that someone would make an attempt on his life and had no scruples on insisting that his guard should sleep at the foot of the stairs each night with a loaded revolver in his hand.

Some Ministers are inclined to regard their Special Branch man as a kind of valet and general factotum. There was one who made it a rule that his guard should be responsible for informing his wife of the names of guests for dinner parties. When in addition the guard presently found that he was expected to make himself responsible for seeing that the Minister's wife was accurately informed of exactly what dishes her husband wanted to be served at various meals, he met the situation by boldly asking to be relieved of the job altogether.

In the eyes of Special Branch men Cabinet Ministers sometimes have strange vagaries. Some, when they go shopping, like their guards to make quite certain the shopkeeper or his assistants are aware of the identity of their distinguished customer. Others insist that he or they be kept in perfect ignorance on the point, so that there shall be no question of the Minister getting unfair priority over other customers.

Ministers like Mr. Churchill and others who have held high posts during difficult periods retain their Special Branch bodyguards long

after they have left office. A case in point is that of Mr. Herbert Morrison, who was Home Secretary during the war years and in that capacity was responsible for issuing the orders that led to thousands of internments. It was because of this and the possible danger of attack by some disgruntled internee or other that when Mr. Morrison ceased to be Home Secretary he continued to be provided with Special Branch protection, which in the normal way would have ceased when he relinquished office.

Normally, as I have explained, the guarding of Royalty is the special work of uniformed men—save in the case of Royal processions or special celebrations, when there are always numbers of Special Branch men mingling unobtrusively with the crowds. The Duke of Windsor, both when he was Prince of Wales and later when he became King, always had with him as bodyguard a man from the uniformed branch—who nevertheless habitually wore plain clothes and would never have been recognized as a police officer. One of the earliest officers on this duty was Inspector Burt—who is not to be confused with Deputy Commander Burt, the chief of the Special Branch. Inspector Burt was one of those officers who had such a conscientious regard for his charge that he became a sort of personal valet to the Duke, anticipating his every wish, studying his every whim. All that Burt was required to do officially was to ensure the Duke was not molested or attacked on any of his comings or goings. The Inspector, however, never went out with the Duke without assuring himself that his own pockets contained such a varied assortment of articles as a piece of string, matches, pencils and paper, scissors, combs, cigarettes and a dozen other little things which the Duke at any time might chance to find himself in need of.

When the Duke abdicated he was allotted a Special Branch man—Detective-Sergeant Atfield—in addition to Superintendent D. Storrier of the uniformed branch, who had been with him when he was King and who accompanied him to France and was responsible for the security arrangements during the Duke's wedding at Tours. I was one of the British newspapermen who covered that wedding and I can vouch for the absolute efficiency of those arrangements.

There were two Special Branch detectives attached to the Duke's household when, while staying at Sunningdale during his passage through Britain on his way to the United States in 1946, he was robbed of thousands of pounds' worth of jewellery. At the time the thieves made their haul, however, both the detectives were in London—one with the Duke, the other with the Duchess. In any case, guarding those jewels was not part of their duties, which have nothing to do with the detection of non-political crime.

One of the chief duties of the Special Branch men is that of providing water-tight security arrangements at every point of entry into Britain—which means at both the sea ports and the airports. At every single one of these are a number of Special Branch men constantly on duty. They are

all specially trained officers and their main duty is to prevent the entry into Britain of such undesirable individuals as political agitators, terrorist agents and the like. Also, these men with photographic memories keep a sharp weather-eye lifting for such troublesome fry as international tricksters of all kinds. To help them in this work each detective is provided with a little book containing the names and descriptions of more than a thousand international suspects of both sexes.

Princess Elizabeth has a bodyguard of her own—a personal security guardian who was allotted to her when she became twenty-one. The officer selected for this important task of guarding the future Queen of England was Inspector Alexander Usher, an officer of "A" Division of the Force with some twenty years' experience behind him. Although he belongs to the uniformed branch he has spent the greater part of his service in plain clothes, like the rest of the officers who are attached to the Palace for duty.

Before the Princess was allotted the services of Inspector Usher the duty of guarding her fell to Special Branch men attached generally to the Royal suite, and, especially when away from London, these officers found that the democratic ways of the Princess were apt on occasions to furnish them with some anxious moments.

These arose from the fact that when the King and Queen were engaged on some function or other the Princess was fond of slipping away with her close personal friends for an untrammelled afternoon or evening of her own inclination. There was one occasion like this in Scotland, in 1946. The King and Queen had an engagement one afternoon, and Special Branch men had watched them depart, with two of their number in quiet, unobtrusive attendance, and were just settling down for an unworried hour or two when it was learned the Princess had just slipped away with four of her friends in a car. Whither the party was bound was a mystery, but it was one that had got to be coped with, and quickly. Casting over the possibilities, the Special Branch men came to the conclusion that the chances were the Princess and her quartette of friends had gone into a neighbouring town for some purpose or other.

Jumping into a car, the detectives hurried there. The local police were contacted, but no one had any news of the Princess having been seen either passing through the town or driving through its streets.

So the Special Branch men began a long and rather anxious search among the shopping crowds and window-gazers of the little town. Cafés were visited, prominent shopkeepers were questioned, but no one had seen the Princess, or anyone like her. But a visit to a car park brought a clue—the discovery of the car in which the party, one of the members of which had been driving, had reached this Scottish country town.

The search began anew, and this time the town's cinemas were the focal point of the Yard men's inquiries. They drew a blank at the first

one they called at. But at the second the girl at the box-office recalled having sold five tickets to a young woman who had asked for them in the ordinary way and which she had passed to her through her little wicket without a second thought—and without seeing who were her companions.

The manager of the cinema knew nothing, and the usherette who had guided the five to their seats with her torch had not noticed anything unusual about the five except that they had wanted to sit together. But the detectives felt they were on the right track and waited patiently at the back of the row of seats for the lights to go up between pictures. Meanwhile every care, of course, had been taken to prevent either manager, usherettes or any other members of the cinema staff getting a whisper of just who it was the officers suspected was in their midst.

In due course the film that was being shown came to an end and gradually the body of the cinema became illumined. The detective presently gave a sigh of relief at the ending of their search. For there, seated contentedly among the young men and women of this Scottish town and obviously enjoying themselves, were the Princess and her four companions. They were all completely unrecognized, and as the lights dimmed again for the showing of a second picture the detectives settled themselves down to wait for the end of the performance. A quiet word to a startled manager ensured that, should he chance to suspect the identity of his Royal visitor as the party left the cinema, he should keep the knowledge strictly to himself and allow the party to leave in the stream of departing picturegoers without in any way betraying the incognito. In due course the quintette motored back home without ever being aware that they had been under the watchful eyes of Scotland Yard detectives from the moment they had been found in the ordinary seats of an ordinary town cinema.

That, I think, furnishes a good example of the discreet, hush-hush manner in which these Special Branch men work, whether guarding notabilities or engaged on some other undercover job of work.

Superintendent H. Cameron, who is in charge of the Palace police, acts as the King's bodyguard, and Inspector A. E. Perkins, a forty-year-old Warwickshire man, as the Queen's. These officers live night and day at the Palace and travel wherever the King and Queen travel. They accompanied the King and Queen throughout their South African tour. Whether abroad or visiting some provincial centre at home, it is part of their task to arrange with the local police that proper precautions are taken for the safety of the Royal visitors throughout their stay in that particular local area. They are assisted in this work by a number of selected Special Branch men who are detailed for duty at each individual function.

Whenever the King and Queen go to Balmoral or Holyrood eight uniformed men of the Metropolitan Police and a squad of Special

Branch men travel with the Royal party. Although Cameron and his men stay under the same roof with the King and Queen the Special Branch men are billeted in nearby towns and villages until the tour of duty of each comes round.

These unobtrusive shadows seldom have any trouble. One member of the Royal Family's bodyguard told me once that in the whole course of his sixteen years' experience he had never had to make an arrest or even be called on to report a single unpleasant incident.

Whenever a distinguished foreign visitor enters Britain every little detail appertaining to his safety and freedom from "incident" becomes the job of the Special Branch. The men assigned to this work are not chosen in haphazard fashion or by rota. Often the visitor has been to Britain on previous occasions and will ask to be supplied with the same bodyguard he had then—a man whom he knows and understands and who in turn is familiar with most of his charge's whims and fancies. It is a fact that most notable visitors from the Continent and elsewhere have a very high regard for the personalities of the Special Branch men in whose care they have been placed and have been very much impressed with the thorough quality of their work and the quiet, unflurried and unexcitable way in which they do it.

Detective-Inspector G. Wilkinson, who speaks Russian, has often been assigned to look after the security of M. Molotov, Russia's Foreign Affairs chief. When the latter journeyed to the United States to take part in the opening session of the United Nations Organization he made the trip in the giant liner *Queen Elizabeth*, it being her maiden voyage as a peace-time passenger ship. The Russian statesman, of course, had his own Soviet detectives with him, but at the last moment before boarding the liner he came to the conclusion that he would also like to have the services of one of Scotland Yard's famed men. So a request went through to the Special Branch. It was a request not just for a Special Branch man but for Detective-Inspector Wilkinson, whom the Russian remembered as having been assigned to him on other occasions.

It was a last-minute request and Wilkinson had to dash away from London in such a hurry that when he boarded the liner at Southampton he had nothing but the clothes he was wearing.

During the voyage there occurred an incident which aptly illustrated the Branch's traditional attitude towards avoiding the limelight. When the liner was nearing the United States a radio broadcast was arranged, for this first passenger-carrying trip of the *Queen Elizabeth* was, of course, an historic sea event. The captain and many of the notabilities on board agreed to take part in this broadcast, and then the organizers thought it would be an extremely good idea if a sentence or two from M. Molotov's English bodyguard could be included.

The idea was put before the Inspector, whose reply, naturally, was that he could not do anything of that sort unless the permission of

Scotland Yard was obtained. So off went a radio message to the building on London's Embankment, asking for Wilkinson to be allowed to make a short broadcast and undertaking that the script of what he should say would first be submitted to Scotland Yard and passed word for word.

It was a proposal that seemed innocuous enough, and the broadcast organizers could not see how any difficulty could arise. But the Inspector maintained a tight-lipped non-committal silence when they asked him his views on the chances of permission being granted. He knew his Special Branch and its traditions, of course, and he was the one man who was not in the least surprised when a radio message came from the Yard carrying a resolute "No".

American newspapermen and others aboard the liner came to the conclusion that the refusal was just one more indication that old Britain was sadly behind the times. But it wasn't that at all, really. It was just the carrying on of the tradition born when the Special Branch itself was born—that its members should work ever in the shadows, unheralded and unsung, and that as individuals they should never on any account be in the public eye.

It is a policy that has paid rich dividends through the years. After all, the chief asset of a successful Special Branch man is his ability to stay, unnoticed and out of mind, in the background. Unnoticed, but watching tirelessly for the unexpected to happen.

CHAPTER XIII

HOW A BOMB PLOT WAS SCOTCHED

UNTIL just before the last war the men of the Special Branch were mainly engaged, and had been for many years, in providing bodyguards, in carrying out general security arrangements for Royal celebrations and keeping in touch with the activities of all political movements, large or small, in Britain.

All that was their normal work, and there was a good deal about it that was pure routine, and unremarkable. Expert shorthand-writers of the Branch attended meetings run by doubtful organizations, took notes of speeches, which were afterwards carefully considered and analysed for their revolutionary content, and generally made and kept useful contacts so that the Home Secretary of the day, and the chiefs of M.I.5, could at any moment be given an accurate idea of the strength, personnel and possible menace of any subversive movements existing in the country.

Just before the war, however, they joined battle with a new band of terrorists from Ireland—just as the first men of the Branch had done more than fifty years earlier. This Irish Republican Army campaign in Britain was just as virulent and dangerous a plot as any in the whole troubled story of Anglo-Irish political wrangling. The detectives of the Branch went into the fight to foil that campaign sadly hampered by a network of red tape and rigid, strangling regulations that clogged almost every move they might attempt to make.

I am happy to think I was able to call attention in the *Daily Telegraph* to the fact that the Special Branch men were being expected to fight these Irish gangs and their bomb plots with their hands, so to speak, tied behind their backs. As a result of the attention that was thus drawn to this state of affairs a highly effective change was made. The officers were given new powers to search premises which, they suspected, were the hiding-places of plotters and of the explosives they were ready to use so recklessly. They were also empowered to deport any suspected Irishmen and Irishwomen without having to go through the long delaying processes of bringing them before the Courts.

Further than this, they were given the powers to arrest any man or woman whom they had good and adequate reason to regard as suspects and to detain them for periods of a week or even more, simply on special orders signed by senior officials of the police force. During the period such suspects were being held the detectives had the opportunity of gathering sufficient information against them to submit to the Home Office for an order of deportation to be made.

These were powers wider than any police had ever held in Britain, but the officers of the Special Branch were fighting desperate, cunning men against whom the use of kid-glove methods was quite vain. The authorities readily realized that exceptional means were necessary to deal with exceptional matters such as these. They also realized that, however wide the special powers given to the men of the Special Branch, there was no danger of their being abused.

So the Special Branch men were able to go to work with comparatively free hands. They worked splendidly and to such good purpose that within a matter of a few weeks they were able to report that the gangs of desperadoes were broken up. And it was all done without the British public knowing very much about it.

It was during this battle of wits with desperate bomb-plotters from Ireland that the Yard for the first time made use of the American method of lining-up suspects before gatherings of detectives so that faces and gaits and other individual peculiarities could be observed and memorized. Suspects were required to take part in these parades by walking one by one across a brightly lighted stage and then standing and facing the seated detectives while details such as height and weight and colouring were pointed out. Such suspects had come over from Ireland and almost to a man were strangers to the detectives, and, so far as England was concerned, they had no police records. Often they only crossed from Dublin or Cork for a day or two, limiting their stay on English soil to the few hours they required to plant a bomb before doubling back to Ireland.

Every suspect, therefore, who fell into police hands was passed through this Yard line-up. In the case of those who were afterwards deported this process was found to be of the utmost value, especially to Special Branch men posted to the various ports to keep watch for any who might attempt to re-enter the country. Officers, it was found, recognized at a glance those men they had seen once at the line-up and generally the system was found to be a great advance on the old one of relying entirely on printed descriptions and photographs, however full and explicit these might chance to be, and Britain's ports remained sealed against a return of desperadoes who had once been deported.

One of the best pieces of work done during the scotching of this Irish terrorist campaign was the frustration of a deep-laid plot to cause a number of explosions outside the Royal Exchange and the Bank of England—right in the heart of the crowded and busy City of London. In scotching this particular plot Special Branch detectives worked in collaboration with those of the Flying Squad.

The plot was an extremely well-planned one. It provided for no fewer than ten high-explosive bombs to be detonated at the same hour—12.30 p.m. As anyone who knows the City of London is aware, at that hour the area embracing the Bank and the Royal Exchange

is experiencing its busiest period of the day, with hurrying business folk thronging the pavements in an unending stream and roads never still from the ceaseless flow of traffic, including taxi-cabs and crowded buses.

An ingenious method had been devised by the plotters to get their bombs to the spot and to leave them planted there without detection. No fewer than ten box-tricycles had been procured. These were variously treated so that some presented the appearance of the familiar ice-cream cycle tri-car, others became apparently innocent tradesmen's delivery cycles, while two belonged ostensibly to a well-known women's hat business, according to the legends painted in professional style on the sides.

Packed away in each of these box-tricycles, however, was a high-explosive bomb, with an alarm clock fitted to a detonator. That alarm clock was timed to set off the infernal machine at 12.30 p.m. in each case, the vehicles having first been wheeled to the area and each left at the kerb at some pre-arranged spot outside either the Bank or the Exchange.

Had those bombs gone off according to plan, the whole ten of them, London would have had a death-roll that day that would have focused world attention on the capital. Had only one of the bombs exploded heavy casualties could not have failed to be caused, but the under-cover men of the Special Branch got wind of the plot in the nick of time. On the very morning set for the outrage there was a swoop on a house in Bayswater. That house was the headquarters of the plotters, the gathering-point for those who were to ride these boxes of death into the heart of the City of London, one by one, and leave them parked in appointed places at the kerb.

Other places were raided simultaneously by Flying Squad detectives, and when all the raids had ended—and they were all perfectly planned operations—the score or more of Irish men and women gathered into the Yard's net included not merely the rank and file plotters but those who had conceived and directed such a daring stroke. Moreover, all the tricycles, together with their explosive contents, were safely gathered in. Thousands of City people—bank clerks, typists, workers in stockbroking offices and the like among them—went off to their lunches in their accustomed cafés and restaurants that day not realizing that by a hair's breadth they had missed being the victims of what would surely have proved to be one of the greatest disasters the City had ever known.

But the Yard sang no song of praise about its scotching of that plot—it was, after all, just another job of work, quietly and effectively carried out to its proper ending.

Officialdom has often sadly hampered the work of the Special Branch men, in anxiety that nothing shall happen in Britain that can in any way be construed as an infringement of the liberty of the sub-

ject. For instance, some time ago organizers of certain Communist cells working in Britain had the temerity to complain to the Home Office that these bodies were being specially and quite unfairly singled out for special attention by the Special Branch detectives, who, it was alleged, actually had their own agents planted in the membership of the organization for the making of contacts and the gathering of accurate information about Communist plans and projects.

The complaints were not brushed lightly aside. The Home Secretary of that day, ignoring the necessity for the detectives' undercover work, come to the conclusion that methods such as this would not do so far as Britain was concerned, and orders were accordingly issued that had the effect of curbing the activities of the Special Branch in this particular direction.

The result was inevitable. Scotland Yard very quickly found that all touch with underground movements in the country had been lost—a state of things that was one day bound to result in an outbreak of trouble that would otherwise have been avoided without fuss or bother—or injustice.

The Home Office likewise found itself cut off from the really vital information of which that Department should always be in possession. For the Home Office has no way of knowing just what various underground movements are planning other than from the information gathered for them by the men of the Special Branch.

The effect of this curbing of the Special Branch was plainly demonstrated when a wave of organized "squatting" by allegedly homeless families struck London in 1946. The squatters moved up from the East End and elsewhere and boldly took over blocks of flats and other buildings in the West End and other parts of the capital.

Now that swoop by thousands of squatters, who converged on and took over hundreds of flats at a given moment, was a highly organized operation which spoke of expert and widespread planning. That planning was all carried out in secret, so much in secret that the detectives of the Special Branch had not the slightest inkling of what was afoot.

The Home Office, which had, by its earlier methods, cut off Scotland Yard's chances of gathering information of this character, realized with a big shock that it was wrong and dangerous for a state of affairs like this to be in existence. The Special Branch, it was realized freely, had got to be in the position of knowing just what was going on in the country, however its detectives gathered their information. So the word went out from Whitehall that henceforth the Special Branch must be allowed to function with complete freedom —so long, of course, as there was no interference with political movements and unless a definite offence was being committed.

So today the men of the Special Branch are once more in the position of knowing exactly what is going on in the political under-

ground of Britain. The extent of its dossiers in this connection would be a surprise to a good many people who fondly believe they have and can continue to enjoy a free hand in the stirring up of whatever trouble they have a mind to.

I personally see nothing wrong in this gathering of information by the Yard's hush-hush men. It must be borne in mind that no action is ever taken unless the Yard chiefs are convinced an offence has been committed—an offence, that is, that will enable them to bring those committing the offence into court on a definite charge. The Special Branch has no *agents provocateur* in its ranks. It is no Gestapo, but it must know all that is going on, all the plottings and intrigues that may result either in definite threats to the safety and security of the State or to the stirring up of disturbances and trouble that will prove harmful to the general community. And if those plottings overstep the line and lead to an infringement of the law of the land, action must, and should, follow.

One very important function of the Special Branch is the handling of cases for Military Intelligence. There are obvious reasons why it is undesirable for officers of M.I.5 to appear in open courts, either to go into the witness-box for the giving of evidence or for the supporting in other ways of a prosecution. What happens, therefore, is that when the Secret Service men who have completed their own investigations are convinced an offence has been committed against the State and that they have sufficient evidence in their possession to prove it, the whole dossier is handed over to the Special Branch. It then becomes the duty of Special Branch detectives to make the necessary arrest, present the evidence and place the requisite facts before the Court.

Since the end of the war the Special Branch men have been very largely concerned in the investigation of cases of application for British naturalization. Here it should be explained that no alien can acquire that much-sought status before his whole history and background have been thoroughly vetted and the Home Office given the word that he is a fit and proper person to be given British citizenship.

The magnitude of this job will be gathered when it is mentioned that in 1946 the total number of aliens registered in the Metropolitan district was no fewer than 132,913. The figures of the main nationalities were: Russian, 23,219; German, 21,286; Polish, 14,441; Austrian, 10,155; Italian, 8,032; French, 6,425; Czechoslovak, 6,383; Belgian, 5,582; Swiss, 5,303; Dutch, 4,837; United States, 4,819; Norwegian, 3,910; Spanish, 2,194; Hungarian, 2,111; Rumanian, 1,666.

The majority of these foreigners are good citizens, and cause no trouble. But there is, of course, a percentage of undesirables among those seeking naturalization, and every year some 200 foreigners are deported, following the commission of some criminal offence. Now

the Special Branch detectives do not find any difficulty about the deportation of those aliens whose histories are known to them. All they have to do is to escort the unwanted one to the coast, put him aboard a ship bound for his country of origin and make sure he duly sails in it. Where difficulty does arise is in the deportation of aliens who claim that they are Stateless or do not know their country of origin.

It is obviously of no use to put a deportee aboard a ship unless his country of origin is known, and can be proved beyond all question, otherwise at whatever country that ship calls he will be prevented from landing and will still be aboard when the vessel returns to the shores of England. The Special Branch men, therefore, have a good deal of probing to do in cases like this, and their work in this direction usually results in the solving of some very ticklish problems.

By special arrangements with the Continental authorities a number of Special Branch men are permanently stationed in Paris and at a number of Continental ports, and their work facilitates to a marked degree co-operation between Scotland Yard and the various police forces across the Channel. Beyond this the Branch also works in the closest liaison with the officers of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Washington. High officers of the latter organization not long ago visited the Yard to see for themselves just how the men of the Special Branch carry out their political investigations without permitting the Branch to become in any way a Gestapo.

Evidence of the far-flung activities of the Branch was recently furnished when a woman terrorist agent succeeded in planting a bomb in the Colonial Office, in the heart of Whitehall's closely guarded offices, and again when a batch of letters containing small bombs was discovered in the mails from Italy, addressed to British Cabinet Ministers and other prominent individuals.

To pursue inquiries into these matters Chief Detective-Inspector E. Jones flew to Paris to link up with investigators of the Sûreté Nationale, while Detective-Inspector Wilkinson flew to Brussels to interrogate a man and woman detained there by the Brussels police on suspicion of being terrorist agents. Yet a third Special Branch officer was sent to Palestine to act as liaison officer with the Intelligence bureau there.

Detectives of the Special Branch are kept fairly busy probing anonymous threats on the lives of Cabinet Ministers—which are far more frequent than is generally realized. These threats are seldom serious ones, though each single case has to be most searchingly investigated. In many cases the Special Branch detectives know the culprit. Nine times out of ten he is a crank with some fancied grievance. In such a case he will be quietly interviewed and prevailed on to refrain from repeating the offence. A prosecution in such a case is seldom undertaken, because it is fully recognized at the Yard that the notoriety of a court case is exactly what the crank is aiming for, and

there is no earthly reason why he should be officially helped to achieve that aim.

It is not only because it is manifestly undesirable that Special Branch detectives and Special Branch work should be publicized that little is vouchsafed to the public of these things. There is the added reason that it is unwise or at any rate undesirable to give publicity to small underground bodies whose activities they have under investigation.

Raids by Special Branch detectives are so infrequent that when one does occur it becomes big news, and the people who have been raided, or the organizers of this or that small but troublesome movement, at once begin to feel important.

When the Branch detectives do undertake a raid, however, they make a very thorough job of the business. I once watched them raid the headquarters of a Trotskyite organization in the Harrow Road—a small but virulent organization which was suspected of being the mainspring behind a number of after-war strikes on the Clyde and elsewhere. The raid took place at 9.30 in the morning, and was a masterpiece of efficient organization that left not a thing to chance. There were Special Branch detectives mingling with the crowds passing the offices and at a given signal these officers were all inside the place and occupying strategic points in every one of the rooms before the suspect staff had the opportunity of destroying or secreting a single document. Simultaneously other detectives entered the homes of other suspects associated with the matter and began searches there. Those searches were the most thorough things of the kind I have ever seen. Unhurriedly and with infinite patience the officers went through every inch of the premises with a fine-tooth comb, and when they left they took away with them every possible document that seemed likely to be of the slightest use to them in their investigations.

But that particular raid gave the organization free publicity which was worth many thousands of pounds. By it the organization was made known to millions of people who had never previously heard of it, and I am certain the Special Branch detectives would never have made that raid had there been any other means of acquiring just the information they wanted.

If sabotage is suspected in any factory it is the job of the Special Branch officers to ferret out the perpetrators. During the war these hush-hush detectives worked in many Government factories where sabotage and deliberate attempts at wrecking were suspected. But cases of sabotage in Britain during the war were nearly all of a minor character, and so far as is known none was perpetrated by Nazi agents, being mostly the work of Communist sympathizers and Communist plotters.

The Special Branch officers have made it their business to know the background and personal histories and associations of most of the

Student-detectives searching for clues at the scene of an imaginary murder

The real thing: Yard men photographed at dawn at the scene of an actual murder—that of a girl found strangled at Blackheath

agitators in Britain, the men who suggest unauthorized methods for the settlement of labour troubles and then foment strike action. They know the identities of most of the Communist agents who join trades unions and other organizations, keeping secret their real political opinions so that they can make trouble all along the line without themselves being detected as Communists and the stirrers-up of industrial strife. They know, too, that hundreds of members of the Labour Party are also secret members of the Communist Party, many of them holding the posts of shop stewards solely so that they can further the ends of Communism.

The detectives, as I say, know these things, and the histories of the trouble-makers. But unless the law is broken it is not their job to interfere. Their sole function in this connection is to keep the Home Office posted accurately with the facts. And they do—with a variety and a detail and a thoroughness that is never suspected by the man in the street. Among the things they have gathered are the histories and political activities of most British journalists of any note, and certainly of any foreign journalist who chances to pay a visit to Britain.

All this, of course, is in the cause of security—and the work of the Branch was never more necessary than it is in the present troublous times. But once again I want to emphasize that there is nothing remotely approaching a Gestapo or Continental Secret Police Organization about this Special Branch. It collects all this information in order to make and keep Britain safe, and its detectives have rid Britain, both in peace and war, of more potential trouble-makers than any man in the street will ever realize.

I doubt if any average Englishman would recognize a Special Branch detective if he saw one. The business man seen travelling in the Tube from some suburban station to the City might well be one. He will apparently be reading intently his morning paper, but behind it he will be keeping his ears open for any chance remark that might put him on the track of some new underground political movement, some fresh threatened outbreak of disturbance and trouble.

For the detectives of the Special Branch are never really off duty, whatever their official hours of work may be.

CHAPTER XIV

SCOTLAND YARD'S SCIENTISTS

A QUIET, bespectacled little doctor who, nearly forty years ago, killed his wife with a mysterious poison, hid her body beneath the stone floor of the cellar of their London home and then slipped off and took ship across the Atlantic, did something far more important than write his name in the Yard's book of murderers.

He provided a case that more than any other up to that time demonstrated clearly that the day had arrived when science must necessarily play a big part in the catching and convicting of the modern lawbreaker.

Crippen was the name of that little doctor. He had thought he could commit the undetectable murder by administering to his wife a little-known poison called hyoscine, which he believed would leave no trace of its action. He was proved wrong about that, but it was not that alone which brought him to the gallows.

Conviction in the Crippen case hinged on the vital point of identity. The remains of a woman had been found buried in Crippen's cellar, but they were decomposed remains and, so far as one could tell, quite unrecognizable. To convict Crippen of the murder of his wife it obviously had to be proved that his wife was dead and that this long-buried body was hers.

The Yard chiefs of that day—the year was 1910—sought assistance on this point from a young and comparatively unknown pathologist who was doing work for the Home Office—a tall, handsome young man whose father was a Birmingham analytical and manufacturing chemist. His name was Bernard Spilsbury, and after being at Magdalen College, Oxford, he had taken up work at St. Mary's Hospital, London, and for a couple of years or so had been giving a helping hand to the Home Office in the solution of pathological riddles.

The job now given him was that of determining whether the unrecognizable remains found buried in a Holloway cellar were those of Mrs. Crippen or of someone else. Painstakingly he went to work and at length produced the answer that was to hang Crippen. He had found that answer in a lock of hair and a little scrap of skin recovered from that cellar grave. The hair bore traces of having been dyed, and young Spilsbury was able to establish that the dye was precisely the same as that which Mrs. Crippen had been fond of using. The scrap of skin bore an old scar which also corresponded to one Mrs. Crippen's body had borne.

From then on Spilsbury's evidence in Britain's courts convicted

hundreds of clever murderers who fondly thought they could pit their wits against the law and win. For forty years he was the Home Office's principal pathologist, and became established as the most scientific investigator the world has ever known.

Sir Bernard was not, as many may have supposed, in any way attached to Scotland Yard. He was a Home Office man, and as such his services could be obtained by any police force in Britain on payment of the stipulated fee. But it was in the nature of things that Scotland Yard asked for those services more than any other police organization. In point of fact, for forty years he was engaged almost exclusively on pathological work for the Yard.

At the time of his tragic death at the end of 1947 Sir Bernard, then aged 70, was in comparative retirement, save for lecturing to young medical students at University College and carrying out an occasional post-mortem examination. He was still the same shy, retiring personality he had always been, hating any form of publicity and seeking whenever possible to avoid having his photograph taken. Spilsbury was, in fact, always shocked by the volume of public interest his work in famous crimes inevitably aroused.

Spilsbury was never concerned whether the case on which his services were sought happened to be a really sensational one or the unremarkable suicide of some obscure dweller of a little back street. His work had the same painstaking diligence in both. A telephone call from the Yard and he would arrive at the scene at any hour of the day or night, immaculately dressed, carrying a little black bag which he had had for many years and invariably wearing a little flower in his buttonhole. A pink-faced, wavy-haired man with quiet ways and little or no conversation, who got down to the job in hand with no fuss or bustle but with a directness and precision that were deadly.

When Spilsbury entered a witness-box there was nothing at all dramatic or sensational about the manner in which he gave his evidence. He was many times described as the perfect witness. I often saw him holding in his hand the most gruesome of exhibits, on which he would illustrate simply and quietly some point he was making, and without any change of expression or tone he would describe the most revolting of details rather in the manner of a schoolmaster addressing a class of students on some quite trivial matter, and apparently totally unaware of the tense and dramatic atmosphere his words created in the court.

No amount of adroit cross-examination could shake his testimony. He had come to his conclusions and he stuck to them through thick and thin. It was often shown that in the view of juries his evidence was unchallengeable. On many occasions famous medical men were called by defending counsel in an effort to upset the value of what Spilsbury had asserted so precisely and unemotionally, and by their verdicts the juries invariably showed that Spilsbury's was the

only evidence that had counted with them. Any criticism on this point left Spilsbury always entirely unperturbed.

Sir Bernard never went about his work with fuss and flurry. I remember once travelling back to London with him from an exhumation in a country churchyard. He carried with him his little black bag and a couple of innocent-looking jars, and as we entered a first-class carriage he calmly placed first the bag and then the jars on the luggage rack and then seated himself beneath them. No one in the compartment recognized the quiet, benevolent-looking man composing himself for the journey up to London, and no one realized that those innocent-looking jars on the rack above his head contained the organs of a woman whose body had just been exhumed and which he was taking up to his private laboratory at Hampstead for one of those precise examinations which he had made his life-work.

Sir Bernard was devoting the evening of his life to the writing of a book on forensic medicine. It was a work on which he had planned to spend four years, and its pages were to contain the accumulated wisdom and precepts in the science of pathology that it had taken him a lifetime to gather. It was not, however, to be a book of reminiscences—Sir Bernard consistently declined small fortunes offered him by publishers in the United States and Britain alike to set pen to paper in that connection. The book he planned to write would, he stoutly affirmed, be of no interest to anyone outside the medical profession. That might well have been so. The book, in any case, was not written. Had it been I am certain it would have been found to contain behind the medical terms and text-book examples material that would be sufficient for a thousand thrillers.

The solving of poison mysteries became a mere matter of routine to Spilsbury. To a man of his vast experience a case of death by poisoning presented no great difficulty. It was the death from some apparently ordinary cause, but designed by a murderer who had hoped to commit the perfect crime, that specially intrigued his coldly analytical mind; and it was in the handling of this class of case that he excelled.

There was, for example, the intriguing case of the murderer Rouse, who hoped to stage his own "disappearance" by giving a wayfarer a lift in his car, striking him down on some lonely country road, setting fire to car and body and then vanishing in the hope that the charred remains would be regarded as his own.

They might well have been but for Spilsbury's work in his quiet laboratory. He was able to establish, despite all the work of petrol-fed flames, that the corpse had belonged to a man who had been struck on the head and killed *before* the fire had started. That fact set on foot investigations that finally put Rouse in the dock.

Again, in the case of Emily Kaye, for whose killing Patrick Mahon paid the supreme penalty, Spilsbury's pathological wizardry

was able to prove, even though her body had been cut up, burned and then distributed in gruesome pieces, that she had died from a savage blow on the head.

When a young poultry farmer named Norman Thorne went on trial for killing an importunate sweetheart and burying her body beneath a chicken-run, a clever defence put forward the story that the girl had not been murdered at all but had hanged herself, and that Thorne, afterwards discovering her suicide, and becoming frightened, buried her. The defence brought quite weighty medical evidence to support their argument. But Spilsbury gave the testimony that convinced the jury. That testimony was that the girl could not have hanged herself. His expert examination of her lifeless body had told him that.

Probably the best example of Spilsbury's technique was seen in what has become known in the crime records as the Sidney Fox case. Fox was a suave, good-looking young fellow who coldly planned what he fondly believed would be the perfect crime. One night in 1930 he callously strangled his mother, Mrs. Rosalind Fox, while they were both staying in a Margate hotel. He then set fire to her body and the room in which she lay in the hope that the fire would destroy all evidence of how she had died, and he delayed giving the alarm until the room had become a blazing furnace, so that rescuers who tried to enter it were beaten back time and again.

There was, of course, an inquest. It resulted in a verdict that Mrs. Fox had died accidentally, and after the funeral young Fox, in a perfectly normal way, put in a claim for insurance money—the money for which he had committed his callous crime.

But the insurance company, as it chanced, had a little dossier about Sidney Fox. That dossier said that the suave young man was not the honest fellow he appeared to be. He had, in fact, been guilty of a fraud here and a fraud there, and just to be on the safe side the insurance company decided to ask Scotland Yard to look into the matter of Mrs. Fox's death.

The Yard did. They had the body exhumed, and then examined by Spilsbury, and the pathologist made the startling discovery that Mrs. Fox had died from manual strangulation before ever any fire had been started. How did he know? Well, there was no carbon dioxide in the blood and no trace at all of soot in the dead woman's windpipe, as there must have been had she still been alive while the fire was raging about her. To clinch the statement that she had been strangled to death was the further discovery by Spilsbury of tiny but eloquent internal throat bruises, and Sidney Fox was duly hanged for a murder which had almost succeeded in escaping detection.

Spilsbury was the nearest real-life approach to the Sherlock Holmes of fiction criminology has known, save that he never interfered with a crime investigation. The investigation of a crime is the job of detectives, but what the detective has to know, of course, right at the start

of any murder investigation, is whether a person has or has not been murdered—and if so, how. It was Spilsbury who gave them that information.

He was obviously a man who was engrossed in his work. No man could spend his life dissecting bodies and being called to different parts of London or the provinces at any hour of the day and night to examine sometimes decaying or mutilated remains without being completely absorbed in the science of pathology. As a Harley Street specialist or a practising surgeon he could undoubtedly have made a very large income indeed. But his fee as a Home Office pathologist ran to no more than five guineas for each post-mortem examination he performed. What, then, was the attraction that harnessed Spilsbury so tightly and for so long to his macabre activities? I think the answer may lie in the quiet satisfaction he experienced at pitting his skill and knowledge against the planning of a clever murderer—and of nearly always winning that battle.

Spilsbury lived in a quiet by-road in Hampstead. He never attended social functions, and had no hobby or any other occupational interest outside the study of pathology. That never ceased to occupy all his waking hours.

As I have indicated, Spilsbury at the time of his death was in partial retirement. His successor, I think, may be a brilliant young pathologist of Guy's Hospital named Keith Simpson. He has already figured in a number of cases and done work which has stamped him as an undoubted rising star of the science that links medical and surgical work with crime detection.

Keith Simpson does not share Spilsbury's shyness and reticence in relation to the type of work in which he specializes. He has, for instance, broadcast on famous crimes that have been solved with the aid of science, and he has shown in other ways that he is a firm believer in the sharing of the knowledge of science with the layman. He is more likely to fit in with the modern idea that a murder investigation is not something to be carried on behind a thick curtain of secrecy—excepting where the other course will impede justice—but is everyone's business and something all should know about, particularly if there be a murderer at large who thinks he can commit his crime and evade justice.

When he plans his crime, and however clever he may be, the potential murderer of the present day is up against tremendous odds. He is not only pitting his wits against those of the trained detective, behind whom are the whole range of resources wider than were ever dreamed of even ten short years ago. He has also ranged against him brilliant individual experts of every kind, whose services can be called on by the Yard at a moment's notice, to say nothing of a number of highly trained men staffing the special forensic laboratories which have been set up at various points throughout the provinces.

Perhaps one of the most important of the experts, on whom from time to time the Yard relies, is gun expert Robert Churchill, a man who has achieved the same degree of eminence in the science of ballistics as Spilsbury did in the science of pathology. He has figured in almost as many murder trials as Spilsbury. A gunsmith with a shop in the West End, he has made a life-long study of firearms and every detail and phase of their operation. As an expert he is a freelance, and in theory, at any rate, is just as available to be called by the defence in a case as by the prosecution. What generally happens, however, is that right in the earliest stages of an investigation in which they think his services might be of clear help the authorities of Scotland Yard call him in, and it thus happens that long before any suspect is caught Churchill is already working on the case—for the Yard. Thus, when he appears in a witness-box it is usually to give evidence for the prosecution.

By the way, it always needs to be stressed that experts like Spilsbury and Churchill are never concerned with the urge to secure a conviction. They are not interested one way or the other. All they are called on to do is to present to the Court the facts as they have found them. They carry out that job in an impassive, quite impersonal manner. Those facts, presented thus objectively, speak for themselves. Whether they prove a man's guilt or innocence is no concern of such experts.

Churchill does his work with two principal mechanical aids—a special micro-camera and an instrument known as a comparison microscope. They are used jointly, and first came into use in 1928, after an investigation into the shooting of a police officer by burglars at Eastbourne. During that investigation parts of a weapon were dug up near the beach at that seaside resort. In the trial that followed Churchill gave evidence, but all he was able to say then with a full degree of certainty was that the bullet which had killed the policeman and had been taken from his body had been fired from a weapon of the same make and calibre as the weapon parts of which had been recovered by the detectives.

Today Churchill's evidence would go far beyond that. He can now say with absolute certainty that a particular bullet found in a body has been fired from one particular weapon. When Scotland Yard investigators give him a bullet or even a piece of a bullet taken from the body of a dead man, and a weapon recovered after the crime has been committed, he will fit the former in his comparison microscope —which is roughly a double microscope fitted with a single eyepiece. The microscopes will then be slowly rotated and each individual marking on the bullet will be photographed by a micro-camera. Then another bullet fired from the weapon suspected to be the murder weapon will be similarly dealt with and the two sets of photographs will be compared. If the murder bullet and the weapon prove to be mated, the fact will be plainly demonstrated by the photographs,

and any jury to whom they are shown and if necessary explained will have no difficulty in being convinced that bullet and gun are accurately matched.

A bullet, of course, takes its characteristic markings from the rifling of the gun or revolver barrel, but the fired cartridge case will be found to carry marks gained from a number of agencies. In the case of a revolver there will be breech face imprints and the imprint made by the point of the striker. Automatic weapons give the claw mark of the extractor and the claw mark of the injector. In every single instance the cartridge case will be found to carry marks which are quite individual. In other words, the marks made on a cartridge case fired from one weapon will not be duplicated on a cartridge case fired in any other weapon.

Churchill has a long line of successes in investigation behind him. Back in 1928 he was able to say that a Browning from which a shot had been fired in the Assembly Chamber at Delhi was the same weapon as that from which a bullet was fired to kill a police officer in Lahore. Then he went on to discover that a cartridge case used in a Mauser pistol in Lahore was linked with a cartridge case found in an illegal arms factory at Sararawpur. Working on these two lines, he was able definitely to link up two cases of terrorism to one source.

More recently he uncovered remarkable evidence which established that a case of suspected murder was not a murder at all, but a pure accident. The result of that evidence was that an innocent man was saved from probable conviction for a crime that had never been committed. That supposed crime was the "murder" of the man's own son.

Central figure in this bizarre case was a former Metropolitan policeman who, while working in his garden one afternoon, heard a shot and a cry from his son James, who was working some yards away. Running to his boy in response to the cry, the father found him lying on the ground seriously wounded. The boy died shortly afterwards and it was established that he had been killed by a shot from a double-barrelled sporting gun. Whereupon the father found himself charged with murder.

Now the facts seemed clear enough. There was no doubt whatever that the son had been shot. No doubt either that the shot which had killed him had been fired from the father's double-barrelled sporting gun. But the father stoutly denied that his had been the hand that had pulled the trigger. The gun, he said, had been left leaning against a wall. He himself was working busily in the garden when he heard the sound of the shot that told him the gun had been fired. That was indeed all he knew about it. As to how the gun had been fired he could only advance the explanation that a dog running about the garden must have collided with the weapon and thus fired it.

When the father was put on trial the prosecuting counsel bluntly

put forward the view that this suggestion of a dog having fired the gun was fantasy and that the weapon could only have been discharged by human agency. It was in this connection that the testimony of Churchill, the ballistics expert, played its part. That evidence fully substantiated the father's astonishing theory of how his son had met his death.

Churchill described to the Court the exact nature of the gun, and explained that the standard pull was something in the neighbourhood of four pounds to the right barrel and five pounds to the left, but that in this case there was a pull of no less than fifteen pounds to the right barrel and seven pounds to the left. The fatal shot had been fired from the left barrel, and as this needed an extra pull of two pounds above the normal five Churchill expressed the view that the weapon was safe against normal accidental firing.

But there was the point about that dog running about the garden. For the dog to have merely knocked the gun over might not have been sufficient to discharge it. But how if a metal name disc attached to its collar had got caught in the trigger and, with the dog pulling on it, had the result of discharging the weapon?

That was not a theory advanced by Churchill. But it was a point on which he could answer with the weight of his expert knowledge and experience, and his answers both to that and other technical questions convinced the jury that a verdict of "Not Guilty" was the proper one for them to return. So the ex-policeman left the court without any stigma of any kind attaching to him. His son had not been murdered, but had actually been shot by a dog.

In that case Churchill's evidence established that a man was innocent of murder. There have been many cases where his evidence has brought home guilt to the proper shoulders. For by making a bullet "talk" he can link it up with the man whose hand sped it on its mission of death as surely as though the man had inscribed it with his signature before loosing it from a murder weapon.

CHAPTER XV

TWO HAIRS ON A WINDLESS NIGHT

QUITE apart from the system that enables the Yard to call on the services of front-rank experts in various forms of scientific research, the Metropolitan Police Force has its own well-established laboratory. This is at Hendon and is under the direction of Dr. Henry Smith Holden.

Principal scientific officer of the laboratory is Dr. G. E. Turfitt; its biologist is Dr. W. E. Montgomery and its chemist is Dr. I. G. Holden. The work done in this laboratory in the direction of scientific crime detection is the envy of the entire world. Yet less than twenty years ago the Yard officers lacked proper equipment to enable them to make the necessary scientific tests that would establish beyond all question that a certain bullet had killed a certain man.

In addition to using this laboratory's team of expert scientists the Yard may, if it is thought desirable, call on the services of experts engaged at central forensic laboratories in the provinces, especially if the subject under investigation is one that requires specialized knowledge.

Each of these provincial laboratories, in addition to providing opportunities for scientific analysis as required by the police forces in its own immediate area and for routine examinations, specializes in the study and carrying out of research in one particular subject. Thus the laboratory that is situated at Preston, in Lancashire, specializes in bloodstain tests and in poisons. A similar laboratory at Cardiff deals especially with the detection of forged documents of all kinds. That at Birmingham handles problems of pathology, while the experts at Nottingham deal with dust fibres, grasses and soils.

There are experts at Nottingham who can recognize almost at a glance the seed of every kind of grass in any part of the Midlands —and tell you from which special area it is likely to have come. If you entered that laboratory the experts there would be able to tell you very quickly just where you had recently been walking or what type of warehouse, factory or shop you had been visiting.

Perhaps one of the finest examples of the close co-operation that now exists between the Yard and the scientists occurred not so long ago. It concerns the case of a woman who was attacked in Soho one night, and who was left by her assailant in a semi-conscious condition.

That assailant had made a good get-away. The detectives who were assigned to the case could find not the slightest trace of him. When the woman regained consciousness she was, of course, ques-

tioned. But she was unable to give the officers any useful information. She did not, in fact, notice anyone near her immediately before the attack was made, and had just been struck down, swiftly and silently, in an alley by some quite unknown attacker. The only piece of information the detectives could gather was that furnished by a man who had entered the alley just after the attack and who had caught a glimpse—the merest glimpse, and no more—of the hurrying figure of a man wearing a long overcoat.

On the face of things it looked as though the mystery assailant had got clean away without leaving behind a single clue to his identity, and the situation, in all probability, would have remained like that but for one little circumstance—the fact that there was not a breath of wind that night. Had there been a wind, or even just a breeze, the only clue would have been blown right away.

That solitary clue consisted of two short hairs, which hawk-eyed detectives discovered on the ground near where the woman had been found. Now two short hairs found in an alleyway do not seem much of a clue. These, however, were placed in a little metal box by the detective who found them, and in due course were sent off to one of the Yard's scientific experts. And under the microscope those two hairs told a story.

The two hairs were not, the microscope quickly showed, plain straightforward solid strands. Each was made up of three distinct sections—an outer layer known to the scientists as the cuticle, a middle layer known as the cortex and an inner core called the medulla. The outer cuticle, it was established, was grey in colour, while the medulla was seen to contain a number of black pigmentary cells.

The scientists found other things about those two hairs, and in very quick time were able to give the Yard a fairly detailed picture of the man from whose head they had come. He was, said the scientists, about 50 years of age, dark and healthy. Under the microscope the roots of the two hairs had shown unmistakable signs of heavy perspiration, and as it is usually fat people who perspire heavily the man was in all probability of that particular build. And there was one further vital point—the man had had his hair cut recently—probably within a week.

The Yard detectives now had something definite on which to work. This was the description which was sent out to a score of investigators: "Man about 50, fat, hair dark, probably wearing long overcoat, had visited a barber's shop within the past week or ten days." The investigators spent nearly a week visiting every barber's shop in Soho and Central London, and at last one of them found an assistant who recalled that about the date mentioned he had cut the hair of a regular customer who seemed to fit the description.

The man's name and address were obtained, and he was promptly seen by two of the detectives. He fitted exactly the picture that had been built up by the scientists. He was considerably startled. When taxed with having been the attacker he at first boldly denied any knowledge of

what the officers were talking about. But the fact that they had found him at all and were there actually questioning him must have shaken his nerve considerably. For after a while he threw up the sponge and admitted freely that he was the man the officers were looking for.

But he remained very puzzled as to how they had managed to track him down, for he had been absolutely certain that none had seen his attack and that no one had seen him anywhere near the scene of it. When told that two short hairs from his own head had betrayed him he was frankly incredulous. But it was the truth.

This example, I think, of a very routine piece of work demonstrates quite well just how bleak is the outlook for the present-day criminal when he has ranged against him the combined work of the Scotland Yard detective and the real-life Sherlock Holmes—as the crime scientist may well be called.

England, of course, was by no means the pioneering home of forensic science. Bertillon, a young man working in the police department in Paris, really started the whole thing generations ago when he put forward the theory that no two human beings possess identical bone structures and suggested that criminals could be recorded and identified by means of the individual measurements of each.

But though the French led the way, the British police were quick to follow and in due course to surpass them. And today new discoveries by Scotland Yard's scientists—and there is something new almost every month—are passed on to other detective headquarters, and also to the International Police Commission, a newly formed organization with headquarters in Paris, for co-ordinating the work of police forces throughout the world.

In their laboratory at Hendon the Yard's scientists make common use of the ultra-violet ray lamp, which can detect forgeries of every kind and even establish that certain base metals have been used in the manufacture of counterfeit coins. With the aid of this lamp a paper forgery is easily detectable. If, for instance, original writing on a document has been erased and other writing substituted, the former leaves behind on the paper a substance which so reacts to treatment by the ray that it becomes luminous, and what was invisible to the eye before stands out clearly and unmistakably. The ray will also make visible bloodstains which have apparently been washed clean from floor-boards or from cloth.

Secret writing on paper remains no secret in the laboratory at Hendon. All that the scientist has to do is to slip it into a special envelope made of a sensitized plate and then illumine it with infra-red ray. The "invisible" secret message under this treatment will stand out boldly—while the paper remains in its envelope. Removed from the envelope and the action of the ray, and the writing becomes invisible again, and although every word of the message will have been read by the eyes not intended to see it, there will remain no sign whatever that the letter or

other document has ever been tampered with. No matter what kind of invisible ink may be used by spy or crook, the message which it has been used to write can be detected, even if the paper has been burned so that only charred and brittle sheets remain. Even if the sheets are in fragments the Yard scientists have perfected a process of their own whereby those fragments can be fitted together and the hidden writing they contain brought to light. As I narrated in my book on wartime espionage in Britain, *They Came to Spy*, the Yard gave the Secret Service considerable help in detecting a number of German spies by this means.

The conviction of a man named Podmore, who killed his employer, William Messiter, in a garage at Southampton some years ago, was mainly due to the scientific treatment of documents and carbon paper. A sheet of the latter came into the possession of the detectives investigating this murder mystery. It was a much-used sheet, and beneath many layers of overwriting were a number of dents that were almost obliterated. The detectives were very curious about these dents, and so the scientists made dozens of experiments, photographing the sheet of carbon paper from every conceivable angle. One by one the experiments were a complete failure. And then at last the scientists had what they were seeking—a photograph that showed the "dents" to be something more than just that. They were, in fact, the impressions of a pencilled figure-entry, which, followed up, revealed that Podmore had unquestionably been defrauding his employer. That discovery, of course, showed a motive for murder. And in due course Podmore was put on trial, found guilty and hanged.

I suppose the classic example of scientific investigation and how it can aid police work was what has its place in British crime annals as "The Dr. Ruxton Case". This was a murder mystery which the Yard was not called in to deal with at all. It was, in point of fact, solved solely by the combined efforts of scientists.

One summer day in 1936 some human remains were discovered by the side of a stream at a place called Moffat, in Scotland. Search along the banks of this stream brought to light further gruesome discoveries—portions of what proved to be the cut-up bodies of two women.

Now there was no doubt these two women had been murdered. But there was not the slightest clue as to who the women were. There were no features to be recognized, no rings or other jewellery, no clothing and no name tabs. And without the identity of the women being established there could, of course, be no clue at all as to who had murdered and dismembered them.

With the police up against a completely blank wall, therefore, the scientists stepped into the picture. Those scientists were drawn from Glasgow and Edinburgh and they went to work patiently and methodically. And presently, from piecing fragments of flesh and bone together, the scientists were able to produce photographic recon-

structions of how they thought the two dismembered women must have looked in life.

This wizardry had amazing results. The photographs were recognized. It seemed that two women had for some little time been missing from the town of Preston, in Lancashire. They were a Mrs. Ruxton, wife of a well-known young doctor in practice there, and her maid. Relatives of each of these missing people were shown the pictures the scientists now produced and were able to give the necessary evidence of identification.

From that it was only a step to charging the young Dr. Ruxton with the murder. His defence was a complete denial, and a story that his wife and her maid had left Preston without telling him just where they were going and had vanished. But bit by bit his story was broken down and there came the inevitable day when he stood in the dock and heard himself sentenced to death. And the evidence that hanged him had been found directly in the laboratory.

The work of scientists is perhaps more valuable in the field of crime detection in Britain than anywhere else. American and Continental detectives have a much greater freedom in the matter of interrogating suspects than their British counterparts and accordingly are able to take many short cuts towards the solving of crime riddles that are denied to British detectives. In Britain, it must be stressed, a man, however strong suspicion against him may be, is innocent until he is proved guilty. That means the man is not faced with the onus of proving himself innocent. The onus—of proving him guilty—is on the police, and, whatever views may be held to the contrary, that principle is immutably adhered to. It is a principle of absolute fairness, but it may often weight the dice in favour of a guilty man. And, as will be freely recognized, it sometimes greatly hampers police investigations.

The Yard detective does not always have to wait for the probings of the scientists before he makes his arrest. Every detective at Scotland Yard is given a certain amount of scientific training. At the Police College he will have been taught a good deal about knife wounds and how to identify the kind of weapon that inflicted them. He will have learned the significance of blood splashes, of marks made by various kinds of car tyres, and of every conceivable type of foot-print. The College lecturers will have taught him how to get busy on a crime from the word "go", however necessary it might later prove to call in one or other of the scientific experts available.

Not so long ago Chief Detective-Inspector R. Fabian, one of the Yard's chief investigators, was sent down to Warwick to try to solve a mystery that was worrying the local police. A constable had discovered a gang of warehouse thieves hard at work plundering a warehouse, had tackled them and had been nearly murdered for his pains, having been badly battered about the head with his own truncheon, wrenched from his grasp by one of the gangsters.

Now the policeman lived quite close to the scene of this desperate affray, and the policeman's wife, hearing the fight, had pluckily rushed out in her nightdress to her husband's assistance. She had plunged into the struggle and, tugging away at the clothing of the man who was wielding the truncheon, had endeavoured to hold him until assistance could come. The man eventually tore himself free, but in that process the sleeve of his coat was ripped bodily away from the garment and he sped off leaving that sleeve in the hands of Mrs. Policeman.

That ripped-away sleeve was the only clue Fabian had to help him when he arrived in Warwick. But the detective knew just what to do with it. Patiently he traced the cloth to the North Country loom on which it had been made. The cloth made on that loom had been used in the manufacture of suits issued to demobilized Service men, and the Yard man's next step was to ferret out the particular demobilization centre to which the suits made from that batch of cloth had gone. He found it all right. Then came the business of finding out which man had been issued with the suit he was interested in. The length of the sleeve gave him the size, and the records showed that suits of that particular size had been supplied to only two men.

The rest was easy after that. One of those two men owned the suit from which the sleeve had been torn. Fabian tracked him down all right, and once he was in police hands lines were found that led to the arrest of the other five members of the gang. They all got long terms of imprisonment.

In another case two men owed their tracking down and conviction to the discovery of some grains of brick-dust in the turn-ups of one of the men's trousers and to some unconsidered strands of silk found in a pair of gloves in a motor-car. The men had broken into a warehouse and stolen some £3,000 worth of silk, and had afterwards got away in a saloon car, which, as it swept out of the street, was spotted by an early-morning milkman. He noticed that its colour was grey, and he handed that fact on to the police.

Now these thieves had gained entry to the warehouse by boldly boring a hole through the brick wall of an adjoining building. When, therefore, as a result of an alarm raised for a grey saloon car carrying two men, a vehicle of this description was stopped in another part of London, its two occupants were carrying clues they had never dreamed of. For under the scientists' microscope dust taken from the trouser turn-ups of one of the men was found to be identical with brick-dust taken from the hole in the warehouse wall. While on a pair of gloves carried by the other man were tiny fibres of silk which matched the silk that had been stolen. The two men were shaken by these discoveries, and they had every right to be, for the loot had been spirited away by others of the gang and save for those specks of brick-dust and fibres of silk there was nothing at all to connect the couple with the robbery.

Apart from its own staff experts, and the panel of Home Office

scientists on whom it can call at a moment's notice, the Yard will not hesitate to seek assistance from experts in every walk of life should that aid be regarded as necessary.

One whose help has been enlisted on many occasions is a man named Gerald Gurrin, who works day after day in a small office at the top of a building in Holborn. He has spent a life-time studying the characteristics of handwriting, and can detect a forgery at a glance. He can, in fact, do much more than that. Show him a man's writing and he will, after a little study, so read it and its individual characteristics as to be able to give you a pretty good outline of the personality and habits of the penman.

The Yard has sought Gurrin's help for years and he has given evidence in scores of cases. But he is not exclusively a Yard expert. Private individuals may obtain his services and his expert evidence just as readily. His procedure is the same in each case—the examination of a specimen of writing will bring a report that is factual and precise.

With the increased setting up and developing of forensic laboratories in various parts of the country there is no doubt that Britain will retain the lead it now holds in the realm of scientific crime detection. An increasing number of medical men are being given the special training and experience that will enable them to furnish the maximum degree of assistance to police investigators working on the scene of a crime. And the detectives themselves have been trained to know exactly what to look for in the way of clues—the strand of hair, the smear of mud, or the grain of sand that may prove the vital link in the chain of evidence.

Professor Glaister, the Glasgow specialist, has himself set an example of the practical co-operation between scientist and detective that is possible by presenting to the police scientific bureau his own collection of samples of hair, both human and animal, mounted on microscope slides. There are almost 1,700 of these slides, showing the entire range of specimens of hair.

One point that is worth stressing is the fact that the Home Office, in encouraging the development of the use of science in crime investigation, has made it plain that the unique facilities available in the various forensic laboratories must not be looked on as being merely an agency for the prosecution in this or that case. Evidence discovered that is favourable to the defence must be laid before the Court in exactly the same fashion as evidence that is favourable to the prosecution. The scientists, in fact, should be regarded as expert advisers to the Court. The establishment of such a principle cannot help but enhance the reputation of the police no less than keep bright and untarnished the shining impartiality and integrity of Britain's courts of justice.

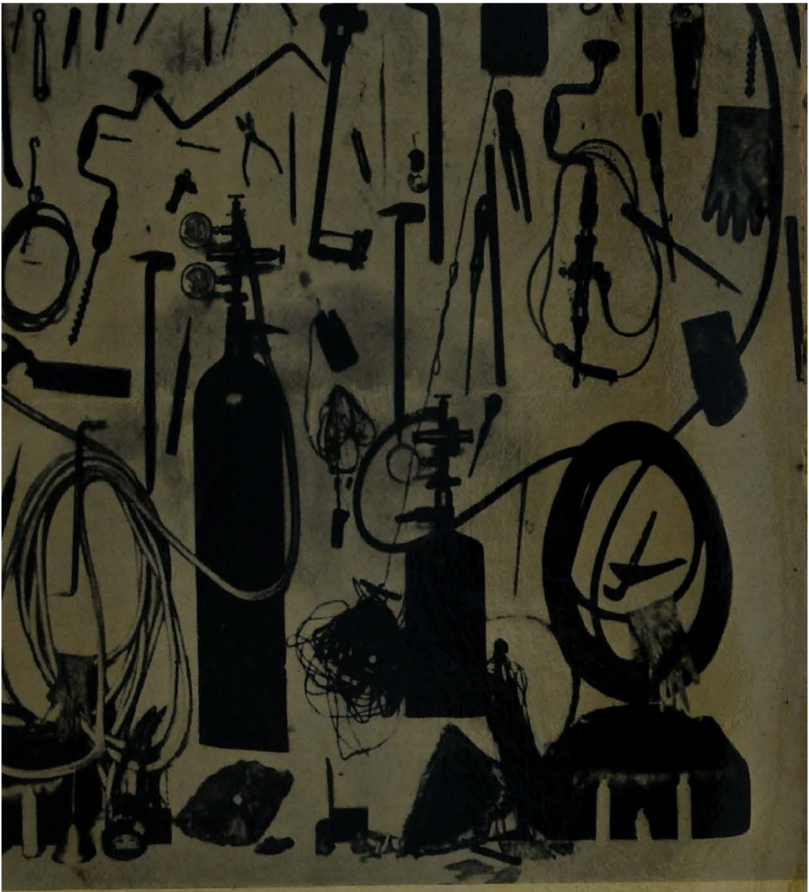
In making it clear to detectives how science and medicine can help them in their work Scotland Yard has made considerable use of films. Many of these films, which are, of course, privately screened, are made

Three pictures of a murderer—one-legged Eugene de Vere, hanged at Pentonville for strangling his girl friend—as they appear in the Black Museum.

As a young man-about-town

As a street musician

In disguise when hunted by the Yard



One of the most elaborate burglars' outfits ever captured by the police

entirely by the Yard, with detective personnel playing all the characters, criminals and investigators alike. There is one film, for instance, which deals solely with foot-prints and the deductive lessons to be learned from them. Another deals with the science of finger-prints. A third, with a detail that the reader of fictional thrillers would find enthralling, shows exactly how a simple bloodstain on a poker plus a few fibres of cloth caught on a piece of furniture could lead to the identification and discovery of a murderer.

There is one branch of science which, while it seems to have been generally accepted in the United States, has no part in the Yard's crook-catching machinery. It is represented by what in the United States is called the lie-detector, the apparatus known as the Keeler Polygraph. Invented by Leonard Keeler, it records the emotional reactions of a person under questioning. It can well be realized that a suspect being interrogated by detectives will watch the quivering pens recording his inward feelings as he gives his answers with mixed feelings and will soon come to the conclusion that it is better to tell the truth and the whole truth rather than try to run a bluff. But in Britain such methods are regarded as savouring somewhat of the Third Degree. Whatever results were obtained would be considered as based on an element of fear, and would not be accepted as evidence in British courts.

What has, however, been so accepted has been the evidence provided by a machine called the electric encephalograph, popularly known among the experts as the "E.E.G." Made in the United States, this apparatus records the activities of the human brain. Testing a patient takes but a few minutes. He is seated in a chair with a filament attachment fitted to his head. The activities of the brain are then electrically recorded on a graph, the various movements of each brain "wave" showing any degree of abnormality.

One of these machines, of which there are only eight in Britain, was used to make a test in the case of a man named Derek Lees Smith, who was put on trial at the Old Bailey on a charge of having murdered his mother. Evidence was given by a brilliant young psychiatrist named Dr. Dennis Hill, who has made many experiments with the machine, and who placed before judge and jury the results of tests designed to record the brain-waves of the prisoner. Smith was found "Guilty but Insane", which means he escaped the scaffold but will be kept in a criminal lunatic asylum for the rest of his life.

Dr. Hill, with two other pioneers of this new branch of science, has been working on the possibilities of the "E.E.G." for nearly three years, and believes the machine will help in the making of important discoveries regarding the detection of abnormal personalities. The machine is not intended to act as a lie-detector, but it is claimed that it will reveal brain abnormalities and can produce added evidence that a person is on the borderline of insanity.

It is hoped that by the use of this machine it will be possible to

discover the cause of certain petty crimes committed by juvenile delinquents. The experts believe that some children guilty of petty crimes or difficult to control may be suffering from some abnormality and that the discovery of such cases by the machine followed by the use of drugs or other suitable medical treatment may result in a cure.

I have said that the lie-detector has no part in crime investigation in Britain. But British authorities are becoming so much more broad-minded and less bound by the orthodox in dealing with the apprehension and treatment of criminals and suspects that the day may yet dawn when the use of the lie-detector may become as normal in Britain as it is now in the United States.

CHAPTER XVI

A LONDON "CRIME CLUB"

ON a certain evening once every month a group of men and women, many of them bearing famous names in current criminology, gather in a London building to take part in proceedings any student of real-life or fictional crime would find fascinating beyond compare.

They are all members of one of the most interesting bodies in Britain—the Medico-Legal Society, which is the nearest thing to a serious Crime Club the world of criminology possesses.

The monthly meetings furnish opportunities for judges, pathologists, doctors and barristers, whose daily professional life has to do with crime and criminals, to meet together and discuss, as between experts, points of law and medicine arising from real-life cases. They also exchange views on and familiarize themselves with the latest scientific discoveries which may figure as furnishing vital evidence in some future probings of murder and other crimes not yet committed.

Among the famous people who attend these monthly meetings are Dr. Norwood East, who lectures on crime to students of London University, is an expert on drugs, and who formerly held the post of senior medical officer to Britain's prison service, and Mr. Roche Lynch, who is one of the most notable among the expert pathologists called in from time to time by the Home Office.

Among the women members is Dr. Letitia Fairfield, who is senior medical officer to the London County Council. The legal men include Sir Travers Humphreys, who, first as counsel and then as judge, has taken part in some of the most notable criminal trials of the present generation; Mr. F. D. Levy, for twenty-five years prosecuting counsel at Middlesex Sessions, and Mr. G. O. Slade, who has figured in many a brilliant defence.

Discussions at these monthly meetings are free and unfettered. It is for that reason the meetings are held in the strictest of secrecy. For during those discussions the members, who in their various capacities have had first-hand contact with some of the most notorious figures in Britain's gallery of crime, tell many things that can never see the light of print.

They are points, anecdotes, discoveries and deductions which, could they ever be freely revealed, would throw fresh and often startling light on many a real-life crime story as the ordinary member of the public knows it. And the various papers that are read by this expert or that, stripped of their technical language, tell stories of the patient and generally brilliant unravelling of actual crime riddles far beyond the imaginings of the writer of fiction in their dramatic content.

But the papers read at these meetings, and records of the monthly discussions, are never published for general reading. And it should be understood that these monthly meetings of the Society are not held for amusement or even in pursuit of scientific hobby. The members take part in serious proceedings, and it is a fact that the Society has probably contributed more towards the advance of scientific crime detection in Britain than any other single body.

It provides a striking example of the fact that the judges who administer Britain's criminal law, the famous counsel who prosecute or defend the accused persons coming before those judges, the medical experts called on to give evidence, all seek every and any opportunity to keep abreast of every development of scientific investigation as applied to crime. From that endeavour and the sound knowledge and understanding it produces springs in appreciable measure some of the basis for the claim that in Britain an accused person is given the fairest trial he would receive anywhere in the world.

A striking example of how a murderer can be unmasked by pure scientific investigation was afforded by a case which will go down in British crime annals as the Southport Poisoning Case. It occurred in the summer of 1947, and its central figure was a sixty-seven-year-old medical man, Dr. Robert George Clements. He murdered his forty-seven-year-old wife Amy Victoria by slowly poisoning her over a period of months, then, because he suspected his crime had been discovered, committed suicide.

Clements was a suspected murderer, but the fact that his wife had actually died of poison might never have been established had it not been for the brilliant work carried out in a police laboratory.

When the fourth Mrs. Clements, a woman of some means, died there seemed, on the face of it, no reason to suspect that her passing was due to any other than natural causes. She had obviously been ailing for some time, and her husband had called in other medical advice, though rather at the last moment, and, as it seemed clear afterwards, solely for the purpose of getting a death certificate that would be watertight against later suspicions.

Arrangements went forward for the funeral. And then, at the last moment, orders went out for the stopping of the interment. What had happened was that the police had received a letter from a woman doctor who had known Clements in a professional capacity and had been very unfavourably impressed with certain of his activities at a hydropathic establishment in Lancashire at which he had been resident medical officer.

It was a letter merely suggesting that inquiries ought to be made into the actual circumstances of Mrs. Clements' death. The suspicions this indicated dovetailed with other suspicions the police had held both concerning the dapper, debonaire doctor, who had been something of a lady's man, and the passing of two of his earlier wives. In one of those

earlier deaths the body had been cremated on a certificate signed by Clements himself, and police inquiries which had been considered advisable were thwarted by that cremation, the latter in fact having taken place only an hour or two before the police inquiries were seriously begun.

When, therefore, the case of the fourth Mrs. Clements came along, the Southport police decided that sort of thing was not going to be repeated. The woman's death, of course, might well prove to have been a perfectly normal affair. But it was well to be on the safe side. And so an order was issued stopping the funeral.

Meanwhile, at Clements' own instigation, a post-mortem examination was carried out on the remains of his wife—a private post-mortem, of which the coroner knew nothing. And after that examination the vital organs were destroyed. There was nothing really sinister in that. The young doctor, a brilliant member of his profession, who made that post-mortem examination had diagnosed that Mrs. Clements had died from natural causes, and the destruction of the organs after he had made his examination followed the perfectly normal course. But the destruction was to set a rare problem for the scientists who were later to probe this strange case.

Events happened with dramatic suddenness. First there was Dr. Clements' suicide. He took that step as soon as he learned the funeral had been stopped and that police inquiries were on foot. Then the young scientist who had carried out the private post-mortem examination took his life. That was because he realized in a flash that he may have made a diagnosis that after all was wrong—a fact that, added to the circumstance that he had been working extremely hard, doubtless preyed on his mind.

When, then, the police, and through the police the Home Office scientific investigators, came into the picture they were faced with an extraordinary array of difficulties. Their task was to determine whether Mrs. Clements had in fact died of poison or not. And the vital organs which are normally relied on for examination to determine such a point were not available, having been destroyed.

The scientists were not deterred. They gathered together such specimens of the dead woman's body as *were* available and set to work. At their head was Dr. J. B. Firth, director of the Home Office forensic laboratory in the Lancashire town of Preston, and under his direction pathological investigation on entirely new lines was set on foot.

Now the total weight of the specimens available was but half a pound. Among them was a seven-inch piece of spinal cord. It was on this, weighing only one ounce, that Dr. Firth decided to concentrate. For fifteen days test after test was made in the laboratory at Preston. One by one tests were made for the presence of any trace of scores of known poisons like strychnine and arsenic. One by one these tests failed. Patiently the scientists started again, with a completely new series of

tests, designed to establish the presence of either some volatile or some organic poison. Steadily were the names ticked off on a long list, and at the end of it the scientists were no further forward.

Then at long last a tiny pin-point of spinal cord, mounted on a slide and watched under the lens of a special micro-chemical piece of laboratory equipment, gave a clue. That development came while Dr. Firth was working on a whole series of tests for some indication of alkaloid poisoning with the help of a solution known as naquis reagent. The piece of spinal cord he was watching was no bigger than one sixteen-thousandth part of an inch, and it had been treated with the reagent. And Dr. Firth, with his eye glued to the microscope, saw something happening—something that was to chart a new path in scientific crime investigation. For the pin-point of spinal cord began to change colour. It changed from blue to purple. Then it changed again—from purple to violet. And Dr. Firth turned from his laboratory bench with a sigh of satisfaction. For those colour changes indicated to his scientific mind that morphine was present in that pin-point of matter.

Work did not finish there, of course. The discovery merely provided the clue. The whole thing had to be checked and checked again. That meant long days and nights of patient work and calculation. But in the end Dr. Firth was able to furnish a report that established quite clearly and definitely not merely that Mrs. Clements had met her death from morphine poisoning but that the fatal dose had been injected by the use of a hypodermic needle somewhere near Mrs. Clements' spine.

In due course, on the evidence that was put before them on this and other matters, a Southport inquest jury had no difficulty in deciding that Dr. Clements had murdered his fourth wife. And the whole case left behind the suspicion that some at least of her predecessors had also perished at his hand. Clements was in fact a brilliant man on his own account, with a deep and unusual knowledge of poisons and their effects, much of which was probably gained when as a young medico he travelled the world and sojourned in little-known parts of the Far East. The wits and planning he pitted against the law were of unusual calibre. He must in the end have had secret misgivings when he learned of those first vague suspicionings, but even he could never have dreamed that his secret would be wrested from a pin-point of spinal cord changing slowly from blue to purple.

Dr. Firth, however, had done much more than just prove that Mrs. Clements had been poisoned. He had for the first time proved that even in the absence of the normal vital organs from a body on which a post-mortem examination is being conducted it is still possible for the scientist to discover not merely whether a person has been poisoned but the nature of the poison used.

That is a big step forward in scientific crime detection. One more indication, if any were indeed needed, that so long as even the tiniest fragment of his victim's body remains no murderer in these days is ever

free from the ultimate detection of his crime, however brilliantly planned that crime might have been and however skilful its commission. That "murder will out" is no mere platitude. It is a sound scientific fact that is constantly being demonstrated in the police laboratories of Britain.

It should not, of course, be thought that these laboratories are only engaged on work in the "murder class". They are working day after day on scores of apparently minor investigations—ordinary, unexciting matters ranging from little fires in which arson may be suspected and burglaries faked for the purpose of collecting insurance money to deciding which driver was at fault in some traffic mishap. All is grist to the scientific mill, and every tiny fact and the circumstances of its discovery is carefully gathered and stored away and may itself be brought forth one day to solve the crime riddle of the century.

All the garnered wisdom of the crime experts, the scientists and of brilliant individual detectives is applied to the teaching of the students who attend what is probably the world's strangest—and most fascinating—school. That is Scotland Yard's school for the training of its young detectives at Hendon, on the outskirts of the capital.

The school not merely trains detectives. It provides refresher courses for the Yard's already-established officers and for detectives from police forces in the Provinces and other lands. The school is under the direction of Detective Superintendent Rundle, one of the most experienced of the Yard's officers, and among his chief assistants is Detective Inspector Charles Owen, who for years was the terror of West End dope peddlers.

In addition to a staff of resident scientists, leading British medical men and top-ranking figures give lectures on all types of modern scientific detection, and there are in addition lectures by the Yard's leading murder investigators, who draw on their own actual experiences in investigating famous cases to illustrate the various points they wish to make.

The course of lectures is very complete. It lasts no less than ten weeks and there are different classes for inspectors, for sergeants, and for plain detective-constables. At some time or another every detective of these ranks will find himself required to spend ten weeks in what is in actuality a university of crime.

In one of the buildings of this school is an exact replica of a London police court. It is complete down to the smallest detail, and is used to teach young detectives exactly how evidence should be given and to familiarize them with the atmosphere of the real thing. Members of the school staff act as magistrate, as the various court officials and as counsel. And members of the class undergoing instruction take turns in playing the parts of prisoners charged with various types of offence, while other members of the class act as the officer in the case. These hearings of cases are startlingly akin to the scene in any London court-room any day of the week. The sense of actuality is perhaps largely due to the fact

that the make-believe cases being heard all have sound basis in fact. They are all real cases from the police files.

In other rooms various types of burglaries are realistically reconstructed. One, for instance, will resemble an office which has been broken into, had its safe opened and robbed, and generally been ransacked by burglars. Various clues have been left and the job of the students is to find these clues, read them aright and from them deduce everything possible about the crime and the identity of the burglars, marks being given for the varying degrees of proficiency in this art.

And there are "murders". The school has been the scene of hundreds of hypothetical killings, representing every conceivable type of homicide, with startlingly life-like wax figures representing people who have been shot, strangled, bludgeoned or poisoned. Tiny and obscure clues are left, and these the student has first to find and then to read. There is nothing static about these murder reconstructions. Sometimes the scene depicted is that of a murder committed in a room or office. Another time it may represent the discovery of a mutilated body in some woods, or maybe in the shrubbery of a near-by house. Or the body may be found at the wheel of a car, or lying apparently clueless on a hard pavement.

The circumstances of each mythical crime will have been set by experienced Yard detectives who have played their parts in real murder mysteries and know all the difficulties and all the little "traps" into which the zealous but inexperienced detective can fall. Many of the clues the student will find, if he be clever, will be clues that have played their part in the trapping and conviction of men who have stood in the dock at the Old Bailey and heard themselves sentenced to death.

Every conceivable type of appliance used by crooks is on view at this crime school. There are, for instance, hundreds of burglars' tools, some orthodox enough, many the skilled product of rare ingenuity, and all of them having been the property of real-life burglars. Hung neatly on hooks are many hundreds of skeleton keys, each numbered and docketed. There are crowbars used by warehouse thieves, some so big that four men are required to lift and operate them. There is every known form of safe-breaking equipment, scores of devices used by confidence tricksters. Perhaps one of the most interesting exhibits is a complete set of burgling tools fitted into a little case so small that it can easily be carried in the breast pocket of a man's jacket.

There are forged notes and the home-made printing presses on which they were turned out; hand-made forgeries and the pens and ink used to produce them; faked coins; cleverly made illicit stills, and the tricky paraphernalia of dope smugglers and peddlers. Actual samples, in fact, of every piece of apparatus that has ever been used by men and women who have sought to pit their wits against the Yard's crime-fighting machine. These exhibits, it should be understood, have nothing whatever to do with the collection of crime relics in the Black Museum.

At the school the keynote is up-to-the-minute development in crime detection, and thus the criminal apparatus which the Hendon student is given to examine is the last word in modernity.

There is one special instruction room at the school that is filled with desks to each of which is fitted a microscope. It is in this room that the students sit and listen to the experts—the gunsmiths, pathologists, locksmiths, calligraphists—all the learned men who can give them a sound working knowledge of the various phases of scientific crime detection. And they will not merely sit and listen. They will be given scores of practical demonstrations which will show them, as a whole library of text books could never do, the how and why of many things they are certain to encounter in their everyday lives as London detectives.

Finally there will be the lectures by the Yard's ace investigators—the men who track down the mystery murderers of the moment, or probe this big trade swindle, that big forgery or the activities of black marketeers and other gangsters. These ace investigators keep nothing back. They pass on freely to the young men who will one day take their places all the little wrinkles and knowledge they have themselves gained in a lifetime of battling with London's law-breakers.

At the end of the course a great truth is impressed on each and every student. It is that, however much they have learned and will learn of the aid science and routine study can furnish them, completely efficient detective work must depend and will always depend on their capacity for obtaining information from varying types of people in all walks of life and the ability to draw correct and useful deductions from that information.

It is, after all, that ability, working swiftly, which produces the flashes of inspiration that will convert a detective from an ordinary everyday police officer in plain clothes to a real-life Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poiret.

CHAPTER XVII

THE "MURDER BAG"

THE Scotland Yard detective of fiction is usually an individual very far removed from the real thing, and the imaginings of his creator permit him to do many things not permitted to his real-life counterpart.

There is the business of dashing about the country at a moment's notice, for instance, to solve this or that dark murder mystery. Going into some small country town, perhaps even while on holiday, and dominantly taking over from the local police chief, probing here and poking there single-handed, perhaps putting in an odd 'phone call or two to a friend back at the Yard to get the latest news on some underworld character who might fit the bill of suspect, and generally playing a nice, untrammelled lone hand before catching an express train back to London or taking the wheel of his car to resume his interrupted vacation.

Of course it doesn't happen at all like that. Not even a little bit. The plain cold fact is that no Scotland Yard detectives, not even the ace murder detectives, are, with one exception—and only one—ever allowed to investigate any crime outside the Metropolitan area unless their services have been specially asked for, in the requisite formal manner, by the local police chief. The solitary exception applies to the members of the Fraud Squad, who, pursuing inquiries which are generally wide-flung, can go anywhere at any time.

It is laid down by the Home Office that if a local chief constable calls in the aid of Scotland Yard at the earliest possible moment the entire cost of the investigation that ensues will be borne jointly by the Yard and the Home Office. If, however, the local chief delays enlisting the Yard's services until his own detectives have had a shot at tackling the case and have failed, then the cost falls on the local ratepayers. And it can be quite a heavy item.

A great many of Britain's local police chiefs have no qualms about calling for the help of the Yard as soon as a major crime mystery such as a murder breaks in their areas. They are wise men. There are others who will invite the assistance of the Yard only when, having run into a brick wall in their own efforts, face-saving methods have to be adopted, and there is a type of chief constable who will not call in the Yard in any circumstances whatever.

I know of one local police chief who for years made it his proudest boast that he had never once called on the Yard for assistance—and never would. For a long time luck was with him. Murders, it was true, were committed in his area. But there was nothing complicated about

any of them. They were all more or less according to pattern, and were all written off as solved without much effort or delay.

Then the luck broke. It started with a murder which was most certainly not according to pattern. The local detectives, headed by our police chief, undoubtedly did their best, but their best was not enough. Once or twice it was half-heartedly suggested that this was "a case for the Yard", but the chief constable either did not hear the whispers or chose to ignore them. At any rate, nothing was done in that direction, and as the weeks dragged on it was plain that there was going to be an addition to the list of Britain's unsolved crimes.

Then, while the affair was still fresh in local memory, there was a second killing. It was quite a different type of murder from the first, and the two were plainly not related in any way, save for one thing: once again it was not a "pattern" murder. And for the second time the local detectives and their leader were baffled. Then there was a third one. The chief constable, very worried, set to work with renewed zeal and energy, but as the days went on and it was plain that neither he nor his detectives were making any progress local criticism began to assume definite tones and to be insistent.

The chief was at first angrily adamant. He could see no reason whatever for calling in the services of the Yard even now. But it was rather bluntly pointed out to him that he had three unsolved murders on his hands and that he really ought to change his tune. And, bowing to a determined public opinion, he made the necessary formal approach to Scotland Yard. He got the help he ought to have asked for ealier. The Scotland Yard man to whom the investigation was assigned was faced with the job of tackling a case that was fast growing "cold". But his experience and training enabled him to find the answer to murder number three, and prevent it joining the other two as unsolved crimes.

I have never been quite sure whether the police chief was gratified about that ending or not. It seemed to me that most of his efforts after the arrival of the Yard men were directed towards attempts to prevent the news that Scotland Yard had been called in from reaching the readers of the national newspapers. Which, of course, was a futile and silly thing to try to do.

What most chief constables do realize is that, however efficient their own provincial detectives may be—and many of them are indeed really first-class investigators—the men of Scotland Yard have not merely had much wider experience in the solving of murder mysteries but have at the back of them all the facilities of the world's greatest crime-fighting organization.

The reactions of provincial detectives when a Yard man is brought in to solve a crime on their ground vary. Some are eager to co-operate with the visitors from London, realizing, with their chief, that whatever happens, and even if the crime remains a mystery, as it sometimes does, valuable experience will have been gained from observing the methods

of the Yard men. But there are inevitably other local detectives who bitterly resent the presence of the strangers. They are, fortunately, in a minority. But it would be contrary to human nature if they did not exist at all.

Now when a Scotland Yard man is sent to a local town, in response to the formal request, he goes, officially, to assist the local chief constable, and it is the latter who will issue all the necessary instructions that will follow to the local staff. That is correct procedure. It means, of course, that, theoretically, the local chief is still in charge of the case. But for all practical purposes it is the London man who now takes over the investigation.

The business of calling in the Yard follows a fairly fixed routine. What happens is that when the local chief constable has made up his mind that he has on his hands a case that warrants that step, he picks up the telephone, calls Whitehall 1212, and is usually put straight through to Commander Hugh Young, the deputy chief of the Criminal Investigation Department. He gives Young brief details of the mystery that is worrying him, and when he has rung off Young, after consulting Mr. Howe, the Assistant Commissioner, takes up another 'phone and has a word or two with Superintendent Hetherill, the officer who is in charge of the Central Office of the Department.

Hetherill, learning what is wanted, reaches for his rota list to see which chief detective-inspector's turn has come round for an out-of-Town assignment. If that officer is not at that moment engaged on any important matter in London, he will be detailed to take over the provincial job. Even if he be chief of the Flying Squad, and his turn has come round, that assignment will be his.

Once detailed to report to the provincial chief constable, the selected chief inspector will hand over his squad to his deputy and then proceed to select a detective-sergeant to accompany him as shorthand-writer and general assistant. He may choose this aide from any of the Yard's personnel of that rank. Generally, the chief inspectors have their favourite sergeants, who, if available, always accompany them on these out-of-Town jobs. These two-men teams get to know each other's methods and technique so well that they make perfect investigating couples.

The inspector and his sergeant, once assigned, will not waste any time. They will be off on the next train to that provincial town, whatever the hour, and after perhaps a couple of quick 'phone calls to tell their wives they won't be home that evening they go along to collect their own personal kit, which is always kept packed ready at the Yard, and the chief inspector goes along to the superintendent's office to pick up the "Murder Bag".

There are eight of these Murder Bags, all neatly stacked on a shelf. Eight plain cowhide bags, not very remarkable-looking in themselves, but of grim significance whenever a chief inspector takes one down ready for a journey. For each bag contains the equipment a senior

detective takes with him when he goes off to investigate a murder or other serious crime in the provinces.

Each bag costs about £50, and here is a list of the articles it contains:

Leather correspondence case containing stationery.
Leather roll containing two towels.
Leather roll containing one apron.
Leather roll containing two pairs of rubber gloves.
Leather roll containing four pairs of scissors.
Leather roll containing two pairs of tweezers.
Leather roll containing two pairs of lancets and pliers.
Leather roll containing five test tubes.
Box containing two magnifying glasses and one compass.
Box containing electric torch with spare battery.
Box containing two pairs of handcuffs with two keys.
6-feet steel tape measure.
Steel gauge in case.
A 66-feet steel tape measure.
A 2-feet boxwood rule.
Soap box and set of sponges.
Soap-like material for taking impressions of keys and the like.
Finger-print apparatus with magnifying glass.
Rubber blower for distributing graphite, and finger-print powder.
Bottle of graphite and a squeegee.
Finger-print block.
One folding steel foot-print surround.
Container for liquid, hair or any other matter which might require expert examination.
Container for articles which might bear finger-prints and which can be sent back to Scotland Yard for expert examination.
A supply of telegraph forms.
Various maps.
Sealing-wax, pens, pencil and chalk.

Many of these, of course, are articles which could easily be obtained in the town to which the chief inspector is going. But he will want to have everything ready to his hand once he starts investigating, and not to be hampered by such circumstances as early-closing days in the shops, or any similar delays. Or he might, of course, be going to some out-of-the-way rural spot.

At one period, it is worth noting, there was not one Murder Bag left on the shelf in the superintendent's office. Eight senior detectives were away at one and the same time, investigating provincial crime mysteries.

Very quickly, the chief inspector and his sergeant are on their way to the local town where work is awaiting them. When they get there they will report to the chief constable and then go out and seek lodgings, which, if they can manage it, will be in some quiet part of the town and as near the local police station as possible. They will be very unpretentious lodgings, with rates as cheap as possible. For each officer will only

be drawing a daily subsistence allowance of something under 15*s*. a day. He will also, while on this job of solving a crime mystery that may be hitting the headlines everywhere in the world, get out-of-pocket expenses. These, however, will be on a meagre scale. And every penny will have to be accounted for in a special report to the Yard.

I have been with many of these Yard men on their out-of-Town trips of this sort and have marvelled often at the poise with which, living on a frugal scale and financially much worse off than the average commercial traveller, they advise local high-rank officers and generally manage to keep up their end. It has been odd to reflect that the Scotland Yard man, to whom everyone will be looking for some stroke of detective wizardry that will solve the mystery of the generation, will be doing his thinking, planning every move of his investigation, in the back bedroom of some little house in an insignificant side street—usually in the still, quiet hours of the early morning when the rest of the town is soundly sleeping.

There will be, of course, a good deal of work done from the local police headquarters as well as by the two men from London, who will be provided with a car and any other assistance they may require. But, whatever may be the activities of the local police, it will always be the Scotland Yard officers who will be expected by everyone to solve the mystery—and find the evidence that will immutably establish that solution.

When they have done this—both found the man and secured the evidence on which a charge can be laid against him—it will be the local police inspector or superintendent who will make the arrest and take the man before the magistrates. The Yard men may appear as witnesses, if this proves necessary. But that will be the full extent of their public role. And not a quarter of all the dogged, patient work or brilliant deduction they have contributed will ever be apparent to those with no opportunity of knowing just what goes on behind the scenes.

When working away from London like this the Yard officers are expected to keep in daily touch with their headquarters. And if, at the end of two weeks, they find themselves up against a blank wall, with no solution in sight, they will return to London to make a full personal report on the progress of their investigations to date and to give their views on the line continued probing should take. This visit to London will be no prolonged affair. Within twenty-four hours the two investigators will be back on the scene of the crime, mentally refreshed and reinforced by their talks with their chiefs and ready perhaps to tackle some entirely new and unexpected path of inquiry.

The searchings and the probings will not lag. At the same time there will be no reckless hurry—no rushing of things in an attempt to get the case closed as quickly as possible. The London men may be away for weeks or even months. They will stay away just so long as they believe they have any chance at all, however slender, of finding the correct

answer to the crime riddle and getting their man—or woman—in the dock. It has, by the way, often happened that that final step has been held up for weeks, not because of any doubt as to the murderer's identity but because of the difficulty of getting together sufficient evidence that would justify an arrest and trial. There is one provincial murder case I remember which was solved only after continuous night and day inquiries that went on for six months.

A case that is not fully solved is never regarded as closed. Months after they have returned to London, having apparently given up a riddle to which there is no discoverable answer, the Scotland Yard detectives will sometimes suddenly return to the provincial area where the crime was committed and reopen the whole thing. Some new clue or apparently insignificant happening will have turned up somewhere or other that will have suggested a new line of approach. That new happening may have been a chance remark garnered from the underworld on a quite unrelated matter. An anonymous letter with intriguing contents may have been received. Or in some town hundreds of miles away from the scene of the crime some piece of property, like a stolen watch, may have turned up. But the chance remark is the most frequent cause of a murder quest being taken up again, long after the public has forgotten it and all its circumstances.

There was one murder case I recall that was reopened more than eighteen months after it had apparently been relegated to the limbo of unsolved and unsolvable crime mysteries. That new step was taken because two men were heard talking together one day in a London prison, to which they had been committed on quite a minor affair. One of the men made a passing observation that was promptly relayed to the chief detective-inspector who had had to confess himself baffled by the earlier provincial crime. The observation was not in any way a confession or an admission of complicity of any sort. But it did suggest to the detective an entirely unexpected line of inquiry in the old murder investigation. He promptly went back to the provincial town and got to work. And he was able to unearth fresh evidence that enabled the word "Solved" to be added to that particular murder dossier.

The yearly average number of murders in Britain is a steady one. It stands at about 130, of which only some forty occur in the London area. And it is a strange fact that right through the years from 1890 there has never been any appreciable variation in either of these figures. Just why they have remained so constant is one of those queer things for which no really satisfactory explanation has ever been found.

Many of these yearly homicides are what are known to the crime experts as domestic killings, the solution of which present no difficulties. In the London area in 1946 murdered people numbered thirty-three. Of these eighteen cases were cleared up by arrests, eight were cases in which the murderer committed suicide, and seven cases remained mysteries

at the end of the year. Two of the unsolved cases arose from the finding of the dead bodies of newly born children.

For many years past it has been possible for the Yard chiefs to label more than eighty per cent of their dossiers in murder investigations "Solved". That does not mean, of course, that in every one of these solved cases the murderer has listened to the grim words of the death sentence and paid for his crime on the scaffold. In some instances the guilty ones committed suicide before they could be arrested. Some, again, were found to be insane, and were accordingly ordered to be detained "during the King's pleasure", which means for the remainder of their natural lives.

But many of the cases solved were murders in which not a single apparent clue was left for the investigators, and bearing that in mind the eighty per cent of solutions is regarded as highly satisfactory. That result is achieved mainly by painstaking, plodding team-work with the addition of various individual qualities for which the men who make up the "Murder Squad" have been selected.

It is, I think, worth pointing out that the amateur investigator so much in evidence in fiction has no counterpart in real life—at any rate, so far as Britain is concerned. Apart from inquiry agencies employed by insurance companies and other private firms, and a number of detective agencies specializing mostly in the gathering of evidence for divorce actions, there are no private investigators in Britain. Such as there are are most certainly not of the type generally depicted by the imaginative writer of fiction as being always ready at hand to solve mysteries for baffled Yard detectives. That type just does not exist in real everyday life, and if it did it would not be permitted to operate for a single day. In Britain the private detective who fancied he could go around interrogating possible witnesses, picking up clues here and there and generally getting himself well involved in some murder investigation would speedily be in real trouble. He would find a charge of obstructing the police a much more serious affair than is generally supposed. And while it may sometimes happen that a divorce case inquiry agent stumbles across a case of blackmail or something similarly criminal he will not embark on any lone-hand investigation of the affair but will promptly get in touch with the Yard, tell its officers just what he has come across and leave the rest to them.

Comparatively recently Scotland Yard took a step that has had the effect of making it more difficult than ever for a murderer to escape the just consequences of his crime, however clearly he may have planned and executed it. Undoubtedly, in years gone by there have been cases in which coroner's court verdicts of suicide or death from natural causes have masked an artfully planned killing. This has happened not because of any inefficiency or carelessness on the part of the coroner or his jury, but solely because all the facts have not been laid before them. This in turn arose from the former practice of leaving all inquiries for the

purpose of an inquest in the hands of a coroner's officer, if it was not at once obvious that the dead man or woman had died as the result of violence. Coroner's officers are usually sergeants or constables of the uniformed branch—good police officers in the ordinary run of things, but not trained murder investigators. And in the ordinary run of things a London coroner's officer is a very busy man. He may have five or six cases of sudden death on his hands at one and the same time, and in such circumstances it is obviously impossible for him to devote deep and searching inquiry into the details of each individual case.

It was realized at the Yard not so very long ago that there were real dangers in the continuance of this state of affairs. What was happening was this: A man might be found dead, and a post-mortem examination would be made. If the doctor told the coroner's officer that the dead person had died a natural death, or had died as a result of accident, or perhaps had committed suicide, the officer would duly make his report to the coroner, an inquest would be held, and a verdict in due course given. All quite proper and straightforward and in accordance with accepted practice. But it was found that all this could happen, and was actually happening, without anyone at Scotland Yard knowing anything whatever about each individual case, or having any opportunity to set on foot a probe that might put an entirely different complexion on the matter.

The dangers of such a state of affairs were apparent once the matter came to notice, and it was decided that henceforth every case of sudden death in which there might exist the slightest unusual features must be reported without delay to the Yard, whose highly experienced investigators would then make inquiries which should be quite independent of anything the coroner's officer might have on hand. It might well prove, of course, that these independent Yard inquiries would add nothing to what was already known. Indeed, that must be the case in the majority of instances. But all the inquiry work of the detectives would not be wasted if they succeeded in establishing that the odd case in a hundred—or, if you like, in a thousand—was not the straightforward affair it had hitherto seemed to be, but the cunning work of a murderer.

Doctors, after all, have made mistakes in diagnosis. There have been other cases besides those of the Clements case at Southport where the two words "Natural Causes" masked a death by poisoning. There was one I can recall in which six people, three adults and three children, all members of one family, died within quite a short period, each death being duly certified as having been due to natural causes. One by one these six bodies were buried. And yet, less than twelve months after the last body had been committed to the grave, some little detail caused the first faint flickerings of suspicion that all was not just as it had seemed about those six deaths. Suspicion grew and grew until it had reached such volume that a six-fold exhumation became imperative, and the examination that followed those exhumations established that each of

the six had died from arsenical poison—which could not have been taken accidentally. That meant they had been murdered—and the fact had escaped detection for a good while, and might indeed have escaped detection altogether. Incidentally, the hand of retribution did not fall on this six-fold murderer. The Yard chiefs had more than a shrewd idea of this poisoner's identity, but the time-lag that had occurred effectively prevented the collection of a complete chain of evidence, and no one was ever arrested and charged.

But that case does illustrate, I think, the vital need for Scotland Yard's murder investigators to be apprised as early as possible of the existence of suspicious factors in every case of sudden death. If any suspicious circumstances are unearthed and proved to be groundless after all, no harm will have been done. But if, in the one case out of a hundred, more sinister results attend the probing, some callous, cold-planning slayer will be tracked down and made to pay for his crime. Perhaps more important, he will be prevented from repeating it.

CHAPTER XVIII

NO THIRD DEGREE

Few, if any, murderers ever look their sinister role. I have known the most harmless-looking old gentlemen to be exposed as cold-blooded slayers whose deeds have shocked and startled even the detectives who brought them to light. On the other hand, I have known men of depraved and brutal features whose most serious crimes have been extremely petty thefts.

Detectives, then, can rarely rely on appearances to guide them in their murder inquiries. What can and does help them, however, is the demeanour of a man or woman under questioning. That can be eloquent. Even so, it can also at times be misleading, for it has not infrequently happened that a man being questioned in connection with a murder will give replies in a fashion that makes it clear to the detectives that he is either lying or keeping something back, yet is doing so, as events have subsequently proved, for the sole purpose of covering up some quite different and really very trivial misdeed—something having nothing whatever to do with the case at issue.

Scotland Yard detectives, who are all good psychologists, necessarily place a lot of reliance on the results they get from the questioning of suspects. What often happens is that the important thing is not what a suspect tells but the manner in which he tells it—or tries to evade a fairly simple line of inquiry.

Let me say right away that there is no such thing as the practice of Third Degree methods in British police work. By Third Degree I mean the American filmic idea of detectives grouped round an exhausted and obviously distressed suspect who has been questioned for long hours under the glare of powerful arc lights and is brutally beaten from time to time to induce him to return the sort of answers the detectives require to their ceaseless questionings.

There has never been anything of that sort in modern British detective work. I am not saying that a generation ago detectives were not rather more direct and incisive in their methods of dealing with suspects who, they were certain, could throw a flood of light on some specially diabolical piece of roguery or some heartless and brutal killing. But in the years gone by a few protests made by suspects that they had been subjected to Third Degree methods of interrogation were sufficient to cause a great public outcry, and a set of what are known as "Judges' Rules" were drawn up to define precisely how a prisoner or suspect should be treated when in police hands. Those "Judges' Rules"

are today adhered to rigidly—to depart from them means that a Scotland Yard officer courts severe disciplinary action.

Today, then, while a detective is trying to discover the perpetrator of a crime he may freely ask questions of anyone, whether it be a suspect or some other individual only remotely connected with the matter at issue. He can ask questions and keep on asking questions, taking proper note of the answers and of any variations in them that might give him a line on the questioned man's veracity or otherwise.

The moment the detective decides he is going to charge an individual, however, the position changes. The officer is then, in duty bound, forced to explain to the individual that he need not say anything at all unless he wishes, but that if he does it will be written down and may be given in evidence at his trial.

The effect of such a warning will be obvious. The suspect will not be human if he does not decide to keep a tighter guard than ever on his tongue. He will probably decline to say anything whatever. If he does there is nothing the detective can do about it. Bearing that in mind, it is not surprising that the average Scotland Yard detective will make every endeavour to get every possible scrap of information out of his man *before* charging him. After all, most detectives are good citizens who believe that the public should be protected from the wiles and wickedness of the bad men in its midst. If a man is really guilty, he should be punished, and the means taken to secure that punishment are justified.

That questioning, then, is all-important in the eyes of the detective, not always for what the replies may be, but, as I have indicated, often for the manner in which those replies are made. The man's manner and general reaction can be very eloquent indeed to a detective with the insight that comes from long experience.

It is a fact that a very large percentage of criminals who are convicted in London every year would have gone scotfree had they just not talked at all when being questioned by some Yard man. But it seems that the urge to "make a statement" is just irresistible.

Why this should be so is one of those mysteries of human nature to which there seems to be no logical answer. Scarcely a day passes when the public does not learn through its newspapers of some instance—in quite minor cases as well as in important ones—where this accused man or that has completely given himself away by the making of some statement. I do not mean a statement that is always just a confession on "This is how I did it" lines. A statement that is just chock-full of lies can often be disproved without much difficulty by astute investigators and then become just as damaging and revealing as a frank and open admission of guilt.

Yet, as I say, despite all the daily precepts on the unwisdom of talking, the average crook is somehow unable to avoid falling into this—from his point of view—paramount folly. So far as law and order are concerned it is a good thing he so consistently trips up in this way.

He always has done, and I am sure he always will do. One reason for that urge to talk, I think, is that the man who is really guilty has usually thought up in some detail the sort of story he is going to tell should suspicion fall on him. That story will either be a complete set of dovetailing lies or it will present incontrovertible facts in a fashion most favourable to our suspect. Having it clearly in his mind, he will be unable to keep it there but will, perhaps a bit nervously, want to unburden himself of it the moment the detectives start their questioning.

The detectives do not mind, of course. The first thing a detective wants, whether the case be a murder case or some trivial matter of theft, is a statement from the man against whom the finger of suspicion is pointed. All his work, all his questioning, is directed to only one end—the establishment of the truth. Even a flat confession is never taken at its face value. Every fact in it is inquired into and full efforts are made to get corroborative evidence of every point. Similarly, that search for corroboration will put the lying statement in its true perspective, and the weeding out of the lies will, nine times out of ten, signpost the way to the truth.

It is, then, only in extremely rare cases that an innocent man has anything to worry about when he is being questioned by Scotland Yard detectives. He may be an entirely innocent man. If that be so, the fact will speedily be established by his answers. The police, indeed, will themselves help in removing unfortunate suspicion from him and ferreting out the individual on whom guilt really lies.

The Yard men are trained, right from the start, to keep open minds in their approach to an investigation of a case—and, indeed, right through the course of that investigation. As a rule they have a pretty shrewd idea of the part a suspect has really played long before they start questioning him, and an entirely innocent man can usually satisfy his questioners within a few minutes that he is not the man they want.

On the other hand, they may, of course, be themselves misled. That sometimes does happen—in a very few exceptional cases. And it happens usually because the suspect has some small misdeed to hide, something that has nothing whatever to do really with the case under investigation and is ready, foolishly enough, to go to any length, sometimes even to the length of allowing himself to be suspected of a murder which a word or two would plainly show he could never have had any association with, just so that that small misdeed or indiscretion shall not come to light. It may, for instance, be that, a married man, he has stayed a night with a woman friend at some hotel, and thus, without admitting that fact, is unable to account for how he spent his time at some critical period in a murder investigation. His efforts to cover up the episode will give rise to a new train of suspicions in the minds of his questioners, and there may ensue hours of questioning and cross-questioning before that suspicion is banished and the truth unearthed.

Scotland Yard's methods of questioning are far more subtle than the methods for arriving at the truth employed by detectives of other countries. The process may last for long hours, during which the ground will be covered again and again by questions put in varying form and with varying emphasis. But not the slightest degree of physical brutality or attack will be employed. The questioning, however, may be rigorous and searching. The suspect may be left alone in a cell for hours while the statements he has made are checked and cross-checked. He will be given time to think over what he has said and its full implications, to consider whether he is going to adhere to his story or modify it in any way. He may be led to believe that the detectives really know more than they have let him think. He may find their attitude and their words sympathetic to him in his plight—a hot and strong cup of tea can be amazingly welcome to a worried man and can often produce the truth long hours of manhandling and outright bludgeoning would leave untold.

There will, incidentally, be no horrific trappings about all this questioning. Most of the time the suspect will be occupying a comfortable chair in the detective office, smoking his cigarette and sipping his cup of tea. The questions will be quietly put—just matter-of-fact, undramatic queries. But they will be clever questions none the less, and the man putting them will be a fully experienced Yard detective with a lot of data on which to base them and a more than average knowledge of human nature to help him gauge the value of the replies he gets—help him gauge, in fact, the value of silence, if that be the line the suspect has decided to take.

If a suspect chooses to remain silent there is nothing the Scotland Yard questioner can do about it. The authorities will not permit him to make any threats or to hold out any inducements. As to the former, the Yard detectives know full well that with most types of criminal threats, even of the mildest kind, pay no dividends. The crooks just do not react to them, save to become more clam-like than ever. On the other hand, a little sympathy with their plight will often have results. Sympathy with a man who is badly up against it has often unlocked lips that would otherwise remain tightly shut.

Scotland Yard detectives, then, stand rigidly by the rules when they are questioning suspects. Many of them, nevertheless, hold the view that the strictness and rigidity of the many regulations they are compelled to observe seriously hamper and frustrate their efforts to bring a criminal to justice. Which, in other words, means that in England the dice are heavily loaded in favour of the lawbreaker and against the men seeking to catch him and make him pay for his misdeeds.

The explanation of those "loaded dice" is to be found in the official view that although the criminal law exists for the protection of society, there has always to be considered not merely the bringing of a

criminal to conviction but also the protection of the liberties of individuals who, however suspect they may be, may after all be entirely innocent.

Judges in England have, and always have had, a rooted objection to the practice of anything savouring of the Third Degree. One judge, to whom I ventured to express the view that the end might surely justify the means, observed that the so-called Third Degree could only be the resort of lazy policemen seeking a short cut to the solving of a crime. "But surely," I pursued, "if a detective, by the process of a long and, if you like, bullying cross-examination, is able to extract from a murder suspect the hiding-place of the weapon with which his crime has been committed, he is justified by that result?"

The judge drily retorted that if the detective had really looked with industry and application for the weapon in the first place, he would in all probability have found it himself, without overmuch difficulty.

Next to questionings, identity parades play an obviously important part in the solving of a crime mystery. The identity parades carried out by Scotland Yard today, it can be rightly claimed, are the fairest that can be devised and operated.

No hard-and-fast rules are laid down for making up the personnel of these parades, numbers of which are held every day in some part of London. The purpose is to give witnesses an opportunity of identifying a man or woman suspected of having committed some crime, and the importance of the parade is recognized by police and prisoner alike. The police behave with scrupulous fairness at these parades. The prisoner takes his or her place as one of a line of a dozen—sometimes even as many as twenty—of similar build, age and social class, and the witness then slowly passes down the line, scrutinizes each figure individually, and attempts the task of identification. The suspect chooses his own position in this line, which is made up before the witness is allowed to see it, so that there is nothing whatever to indicate to the latter just which of all the dozen or so figures is the one who is actually in police hands.

The people brought in to make up the line are invited in from the street. They get no payment for this little public service, but will be persuaded into it perhaps while out shopping or standing gossiping at the street corner. Detectives searching for these volunteers do not always have an easy task, as may be imagined. They cannot select just anyone—the ones they want must be approximately of the same height and build and age and class as the prisoner against whom they think they have a case.

As an instance of the difficulties often encountered in arranging these parades I recall a case where the prisoner, against whom a murder charge was being prepared, was a Frenchman of slight stature who sported a distinctive goatee beard. The question of identification was

an all-important link in the chain against him, and there had to be no ambiguity about the testimony of witnesses on this point.

A dozen bearded men of slight build had, then, to be found, and a detective was sent out into the streets of London to find them. Now finding two or three bearded men in a matter of an hour or two is not the easiest task in the world. This officer, however, had to find a dozen. And that on the face of it looked to be a real problem task.

Thinking it over as he left his station, the detective reflected that the man was a Frenchman. That suggested Soho, the quarter of the West End which is the traditional haunt of London's Continental visitants. So he went to comb the cafés and crowded streets of Soho. He was away for more than eight hours, but at the end of that time he had actually succeeded in rounding up a round dozen of slightly built Frenchmen all with goatee beards. These in due course were lined up with the suspect in their midst, standing at a point in the line chosen freely by himself. Then in came the witnesses and one by one they picked him out—quickly and unerringly—which seemed to the tired detective rather an abrupt ending to his busy day.

If the suspect has a wooden leg, then a dozen men with wooden legs will somehow have to be found. It will be the same if the suspect is a one-armed man, or has but one eye, or is a man with a limp. From all of which it will be realized that arranging these identity parades can be a business of irritating complexity. But it is carried out faithfully and the reward is that there can never be a charge of unfairness towards the prisoner in the subsequent proceedings.

When he is put up for identification in this way the prisoner has the chance of employing any subterfuge he can think of to avoid being identified by the witnesses. The professional crook, of course, is up to all the tricks. One that has often been employed is to call for a copy of one of the newspapers that is being sold on the streets. This the crook will ostentatiously carry or tuck half into his jacket pocket—the idea being to give the impression that at just that moment he has been called in from the street as an ordinary passer-by. Or he may have a bandaged finger, in which case his nimble wit will lead him to make certain that every other member of the parade carries a similar distinguishing mark.

So great a store is set on the question of absolute fairness that Scotland Yard will never today issue for publication in the newspapers a photograph of a man wanted for some crime, particularly should that crime be murder. The idea of this is that such publication might conceivably have its influence in the business of identification. Witnesses who had seen the picture of an individual published as being wanted for alleged murder would quickly identify that individual when they saw him in the parade, and the whole principle of scrupulous fairness that is aimed at would be vitiated.

This business of being absolutely fair, even to a wanted man they

know to be a murderer, is carried to great lengths. The wanted man, for instance, as the police well recognize, may be likely to commit a second murder while on the run—a second murder that might be prevented were his picture broadcast in every newspaper and from every hoarding, when possible victims would be placed on guard against him. But not even a consideration of that kind will cause the Yard to depart from their self-applied principle of giving the law-breaker an absolutely fair break.

A striking instance of this was seen in 1946 in the case of Neville Heath, the good-looking young sadist who murdered a woman in the bedroom of a Notting Hill Gate hotel, went on the run and, while the police of the whole of Britain were seeking him, murdered a second girl at Bournemouth. Now the Yard had no illusions about Heath or of what he was capable. But they resolutely declined to countenance the publication of his photograph. And there can be little doubt that had that photograph received widespread publicity in all the newspapers of Britain, as it otherwise would inevitably have done, that second victim would have seen it, recognized Heath at a glance, kept him at arm's length and saved her life.

To critics who brush to one side the point about identity parade fairness in a matter of this sort, the Yard has another and very cogent answer. It is that to publish the photograph of a wanted man in a case such as that of Heath would be to court the risk of an acquittal at his trial on the technical point of an unsatisfactory identity parade. It is an argument with point.

Scotland Yard have very limited powers of search—far more limited than may generally be supposed. Unless they have express permission from the occupier, they may not, except in certain circumstances and on special occasions, search any house without a properly signed warrant giving them direct authority to do so. This makes for many difficulties in major and minor investigations. I can recall, for instance, one case in which Yard men had spent long and weary weeks in an endeavour to track down a gang of big-scale thieves. At long last they located their suspects gathered, late one night, at the respectable-looking house they had made their headquarters.

So far, so good. But the Yard men, though they knew the members of the gang were in the house, had no means whatever of knowing whether the house also contained stolen property, and there had been no opportunity to obtain the requisite search warrant signed by a justice of the peace, since the house had only just been located and the hour was near midnight. All they could do, therefore, was to keep close watch and wait for morning.

That is what they settled down to do. But the members of the gang were wily birds. They were quick to realize they had been trailed, and their reaction was prompt. During the night smoke from newly lighted fires began to rise from the chimneys of the house. That went

on until dawn broke, and all the detectives could do was to watch it and suspect the cause. Long before breakfast-time a police car arrived with the much-wanted search warrant, and the officers, now armed with full authority, made their entry. But they were too late. The gang had spent the night hours burning many hundreds of pairs of expensive nylon stockings, their loot in their last well-planned robbery. Although the detectives went through the house with a tooth-comb they could find not the slightest scrap of evidence that would justify the arrest of the thieves.

Most of the murders committed in Britain year by year are unpremeditated—homicides resulting from unbridled passion or the work of sex maniacs. These two types of murderer never obviously stop to consider the consequences of their act, and for that reason the yearly number of murders in Britain would, I think, remain unaffected by any change in the present law which lays it down immutably that the punishment for murder shall be death—and death by hanging. Nor would the number of other murders—the premeditated killing carried out by a poisoning or the callous shooting by some young gunman—be affected were capital punishment entirely abolished in Britain, for this type of murderer is usually first and foremost an egoist and convinced above all things that he can never be brought to book for his misdeeds.

A big percentage of the murders committed in Britain since the war came to an end have been either sex crimes or murders committed as the result of men quarrelling with undesirable women over money matters. Few if any of such murders have been premeditated. In most of them, indeed, the murderers were previously unknown to their victims. From the detective's point of view that makes things very difficult. With no known association between killer and victim there is obviously no visible lead to inquiries, and with few clues left behind by the murderers many of such cases remain unsolved.

In the usual run of things murders of this kind—they come in the category of "commonplace" murders—are usually much more difficult to solve than the coldly planned murders, for the simple reason that once a killer of the former type manages to get clear away from the scene of his crime there is usually nothing whatever to connect him with it. Planned murders, on the other hand, nearly always thought out with great care and attention to detail, can generally be solved for two reasons. There is always a motive, and the murderer is always in some way, however remote, connected with his victim. That means the investigators have something on which to work. How they go about that work, ferreting out this fact, deducing that, is the measure of a brilliant detective organization.

In the next chapter I will show, by narrating the behind-the-scenes story of how a real-life murder mystery was solved, just what happens when Scotland Yard is called in to a case—and how its ace murder investigators operate.

CHAPTER XIX

BETRAYED BY HIS DOG

EARLY one bright October morning in 1945 two Luton men on their way to work took a path their feet usually trod—a path that ran along the bank of the River Lea.

They had not gone far before one of them halted and with a nod of his head indicated what his companion had also noticed—a fair-sized bundle, tied up in stout sacking, floating in the water only a foot or two from the river bank. "Wonder what's in that," he mused to his companion. "Well," came the practical reply, "let's find out." And that was what the couple proceeded to do.

They therefore dragged the soaking bundle from the river and began to unwrap it. It was not long before they were gazing at each other with startled eyes. For the bundle contained the naked body of a woman.

That was all they saw. They had no wish to probe deeper. But while one remained with the partially opened bundle his companion hurried off to the Luton police-station and there told his story.

The Luton police acted promptly. First thing was to send a detective right away to the spot on the river bank, just to stand guard over the body. He was joined very quickly by the police superintendent of the area and a number of local detectives. The first brief examination showed all too clearly that here was a case of murder. Not only was there no stitch of clothing with the body, but the woman's face bore very severe injuries indeed.

The body was removed to a mortuary, a police surgeon sent for and a post-mortem examination made. This established that the woman had been killed by savage blows on the face and head. And not only had all her clothing been removed before her body had been tied up in the sacking, but every other step had been taken to prevent identification. This included the removal of her false teeth.

The detective-superintendent of the area lost no time in reporting these facts to the chief constable, and that officer saw at once that here was a murder mystery without a single apparent clue. The woman, he realized, might well have been killed anywhere in England, at some place perhaps hundreds of miles from Luton, and her body carried by car or lorry to a spot by the river in which it had been found. A murder mystery, mused the chief constable, which it would require all the efforts of highly trained investigators, backed by all the wide resources of Scotland Yard, to solve.

The chief constable made up his mind there and then. He told his watch committee—the body of the local council that is responsible

for police work in its area—and his senior detectives that he had decided to call in the services of the Yard.

His own detectives may have felt a little disappointment on hearing this. If so, they gave no sign of it. They, like their chief, frankly realized their limitations in dealing with a case of this calibre. They realized, too, that they would have a chance to see, at first hand, just how the Yard men went to work, a chance to learn something which would be of great help to them in any future investigations. So there was no grumbling. Instead, the Luton detectives decided among themselves that they would give the Yard men when they arrived every scrap of assistance they could.

Back in his office in Luton, his chief detective-superintendent seated with him at his desk, the chief constable picked up his telephone and told his switchboard operator to connect him with Scotland Yard. The connection made, the chief constable asked to be put through to the Deputy Commander, C.I.D. Central. And in a few moments the two police chiefs were talking with each other across the miles.

"This is the Chief Constable of Bedfordshire," the Yard man heard. "We have a murder in our area—at Luton, and we are calling you in." And there followed a phrase or two giving in bare outline the nature of the crime.

The Deputy Commander glanced at the clock and scribbled a word or two on his desk pad. "Very well," he told his caller, "I will call you back in a few minutes and let you know the names of the officers we have assigned to you and the time they will arrive in Luton."

"Thanks very much," came the prosaic reply, and Luton rang off. As he heard the click of the replaced receiver the Yard chief jiggled his own. "Give me Superintendent Central," he told the operator, and when this connection was made he began to issue instructions in clear-cut, crisp sentences. "Chief inspector wanted by Luton police," he said without any preamble. "Nude body of woman found in sack in river. No identification, no one detained. Let me know who is going and by what train."

Superintendent Central was reaching for his rota list even before his superior had finished speaking. His eye ran down the names. Against one, that of Chief Detective-Inspector W. Chapman, was an inked asterisk. That indicated that he was the next man of his rank due to cover an out-of-Town job.

The superintendent pressed the bell on his desk. "Ask Mr. Chapman to come and see me," he told the uniformed messenger who answered the summons. In a few moments a cherub-faced little man in a neat dark suit made his appearance. This was Chapman, an ace murder investigator whose looks and manner belie completely his reputation for tenacity and patient ferreting out of clues.

"Have you anything special on hand just at the moment or are you free to cover a murder?" the superintendent asked quietly.

"I'm quite free," replied Chapman. "Where is it?"

"Luton," replied the superintendent. "What train can you catch?"

Chapman had no need to consult any time-table. "Three-thirty, St. Pancras," came his instant reply.

"Right," said his chief. "Take which detective-sergeant you like, and report to the Chief Constable, Luton."

Off went Chapman to the Sergeants' Room. He knew the man he wanted—Detective-Sergeant W. Judge—now a detective-inspector of the Flying Squad. He and Judge had worked together before on many difficult assignments and made a perfect team. Chapman's luck was in. Bill Judge was not only there in the sergeants' room, but had nothing on hand that would keep him from going off to Luton. "It's a murder job," Chapman told him. "Be ready to leave here in a police car for St. Pancras at three o'clock."

Ten minutes later both Chapman and Judge were on their way in police cars to their suburban homes, to pick up a few personal belongings and let their wives know they were going out of Town. They met again at the Yard well before three o'clock. Chapman collected his Murder Bag, signed for it, then went along to the office and signed the duty book, marking himself and Judge as being away from London on a murder inquiry, and on the tick of three both men were climbing into the car that would take them to catch their train.

Meanwhile there had been another telephone talk with the chief constable at Luton. That officer was told what time Chapman and Judge would be arriving there that afternoon and promised to have one of his officers waiting to meet the train with a car.

When they got to Luton, therefore, the two Yard detectives were driven straight to the chief constable's office. There they were introduced to the local chief detective-inspector, who told them comfortable lodgings had been fixed up for them in a little private house. Thither they went for a quick wash and brush-up and a meal. Then they walked down to the chief constable's office for their first conference.

The chief constable was ready for them. In quiet tones he explained all that was known of the case up to that moment and handed to Chapman a folder containing all the detailed reports of his own officers. These told exactly how the discovery of the unknown woman's body had been made, what steps had been taken to guard the spot, what the doctors had discovered in the post-mortem examination. "My officers," said the chief finally, "have all been given instructions to give you all the help you may ask for. A car has been placed at your disposal and an office has been set aside for your exclusive use. If there should be anything else you want, just let me know. The case is all yours from this moment. Good luck—and let me know from time to time how things are going."

Chapman smiled his thanks. "I'll do that, sir," he said. "I'll study

these reports tonight and then, first thing tomorrow, we'll go and have a look at the place where the body was found."

Chapman sat up quite a long time with those reports. But he knew he couldn't get very far that night. Tomorrow would be a very busy day—he'd make this an early night. Which meant he turned out his bedroom light round about midnight.

He and Judge were up early in the morning, fresh and ready for anything. The first move, as he had told the chief constable, was to go down to the river and see for himself just where the body had been found. That was where breakfast-time found him, with Judge and the local chief detective-inspector, and a police photographer was there too.

The place had been cordoned off against his coming. Chapman asked for the exact spot in the river where the sack had first been seen to be indicated to him, as well as the place where the two men had dragged the bundle ashore and opened it. Then he stood for some little while in thought. Those who knew him would have known he was making a detailed mental picture of the scene.

Presently he called over the photographer. "I want," he said, "a complete set of pictures showing just where the body was found and the position of the roads and paths that are near it." The photographer nodded and started work. Chapman lit a cigarette. "There's a lot of undergrowth round here," he observed to the local inspector.

"You'll want it searched, of course?" observed that officer.

Chapman smiled his cherubic smile. "Searched and searched again," he agreed. "We'll want a whole squad of men on that. Not just here, but for a couple of miles in each direction along the river bank. And not only on this side of the river—try the other side as well, and for the same distance each way. Mow it all down if necessary, but see that the search is a thorough one."

"Anything special to look for?" queried the local man.

Chapman shrugged. "Recently made footprints at the river's edge, or any trace of a sack having been dragged down there—you never can tell. Make the search, and see what you can find."

The local man went off to get his search squad organized, and the two Scotland Yard detectives themselves moved back into the town. "I want to see the body—and have a chat with the doctor," Chapman told Judge.

Now Chapman had read the doctor's report, and had remembered all he had read. But he wanted to discuss with the medico at first hand such matters as how the woman had been killed, with what sort of instruments her injuries had been inflicted, and how long the body had been in the water before being discovered.

He made no notes. He just asked questions and stored away the answers in his orderly mind. Then, with Judge always by his side, he strolled back to the police-station. He wanted now to have a little talk with the two workmen who had found the body in its sack.

They could not add much, he found, to what they had already said. They explained to him how, walking along the river bank, they had noticed the sack caught in some reeds, and, noting that it had seemed to contain something fairly substantial, had decided to open it and had found out what that something substantial was. As soon as they had discovered the gruesome truth they had told the police.

Chapman saw that before he or anyone else could make a real start in the solving of this mystery the dead woman had to be identified. That is the starting-point in almost any murder mystery, of course. In this case, the detectives realized, it was not going to be at all easy to establish that identification.

In the local police-station were the customary lists of women who had been reported missing, not merely from the town itself but over a fair area round about. Chapman put local detectives on to the job of going through these lists with a fine-tooth comb, calling on the relatives and searching for some little grain of fact that might prove a clue. These detectives had been furnished with as good a description as was possible of what the dead woman had looked like in life. There was the colour of her hair, the condition of her teeth, her height and build to work on.

At the same time a corps of other detectives were given the job of making house-to-house calls in Luton to try to discover if any woman was missing but whose disappearance had not been reported to the police.

Chapman took one further step—a routine one. He had the description he had compiled sent through to Scotland Yard. Within a few minutes of its receipt there it was being circulated by teleprinter to every police-station, with the request that if any word of the missing woman could be found it should be sent through at once to the Chief Constable of Luton.

When he had seen this description despatched to Scotland Yard Chapman stubbed out his cigarette and looked up at the police-station clock. The hour was just midnight. "We'll call it a day," he observed to Judge. And the two men walked through the silent streets to their lodgings.

But Chapman's "We'll call it a day" had applied only to active work there in the police-station. Both he and Judge knew they were not going straight to bed, late as the hour was. In the little sitting-room of their lodgings they sat down over a cup of tea brewed by Judge, lit their cigarettes and began to swap ideas about the tricky nature of the case they had on their hands. There were a lot of angles. Was, for instance, the dead woman a "local"—or had she been murdered many miles away and the body brought to Luton in a car or a lorry and dumped in the river where it had been found? Or had the body been flung into the river some distance either up or down the river bank and carried along by the tide?

These were, of course, theories—just that and nothing more. And both Chapman and Judge knew well enough that theories are not much use without facts. Still, discussion even of nebulous theories sometimes opens up lines of thought that may prove profitable. And so the two men talked, both of theories and of facts—the few facts that so far were known.

These facts had been provided by the medical officer's examination. They were that the woman had been killed by a blow on the head—probably inflicted with a piece of wood. That her body had been in the river a matter of about three days. And that she was a woman of the working class, aged about thirty.

"Three days ago," commented Chapman to Judge, as the little clock on the mantelpiece struck three. "Well, tomorrow we'll try and trace and check up on the driver of every lorry that we can find who passed this way round about that time. Now let's get to bed."

Next day was a busy one. The search for lorry-drivers was put in hand. Before it ended more than 750 lorry-drivers were found who had passed through the area either on their way to or from London at the time the murder was believed to have been committed. All, with the help of other police forces, were traced and interviewed. Chapman went through the reports himself. He satisfied himself that not one of these drivers could be regarded as suspect.

Another line that drew a blank was the house-to-house search by the Luton police for some unreported missing woman. There were, it was found, many women who were away from home. There was not one, however, who could not satisfactorily be accounted for.

In the succeeding days Chapman launched one of the biggest and most systematic searches for missing women ever carried out in Britain. More than 500 were traced and more than 4,000 people whose female relatives were missing were interviewed, and shown the description of the Luton mystery woman. Thousands of photographs of the woman, taken after death, were circulated throughout the country, and in Northern Ireland and Eire as well. The photographs were flashed on to the screens of cinemas. The net result of all this activity was that the woman was "identified" by six different families in widely separated parts of the country. And when these six "identifications" were properly probed each one of them fell to the ground as a mistake.

As the days turned into weeks Chapman tried one other line. He had the records of every dentist in Britain searched and searched again—for the woman, remember, had worn false teeth, though these were missing. But this line of inquiry proved just as fruitless as all the rest.

At the end of a fortnight Chapman went back to the Yard. He had a completely negative report to make. But he was by no means disheartened. Neither, knowing him, were his chiefs. Twenty-four hours later he was back again at Luton, searching again, cudgelling his brains

for some flash of inspiration that might put him on the right line. On the off-chance he had every dustbin in Luton suddenly searched. He somehow had the idea that a scrap of torn cloth might be brought to light—a scrap of cloth that might give him the lead he was so nebulously seeking. The search was made, scrupulously, but it yielded exactly nothing.

The weeks lengthened into months now. Chapman made his periodic trips back to London, always with no progress to report, and always with the plea that he be permitted to go back to Luton and keep trying. He just refused to give in, believing that somewhere a solution to the mystery was to be found and that if he persevered he would surely find it. There did not at this date seem much more than faith to sustain this view. But then, as I have said, Chapman has the reputation of being one of the most tenacious of all the Yard murder detectives, and his chiefs left him on the case.

Nearly three months had gone by and Chapman and Judge were still at Luton. But even the patient Chapman's hopes had now worn very thin. So thin that one day he suddenly turned to his aide with a weary little smile. "It's no good," he said. "We're beaten this time, Bill. I think we'd better throw in our hand and go back to the Yard. This is one case that is going to be marked 'Unsolved'."

Judge nodded his agreement. "Seems the only thing to do now—though it's a pity after all the work that's been put in."

"It sometimes happens that way," said Chapman. "Let's go and pack."

They did. And having done that they set out for the police-station to say their good-byes to the local men. And then an incredible thing happened. They were walking, rather glumly, through Regent Street when suddenly an exclamation broke from Chapman's lips and he halted in his tracks. Judge halted too, and stared in the direction indicated by his senior's pointing finger.

What they saw was a little dog, running from a heap of rubbish on a piece of waste ground. Nothing very remarkable in that. But the dog was carrying in its mouth a scrap of cloth. And a scrap of cloth somehow, in a way he could not possibly have explained, had always been at the back of his mind as the thing that would provide the vital clue he had so patiently sought. That was the hunch that had caused him to have all those dustbins searched—a step that had puzzled a lot of people.

Chapman whistled to the dog—and it promptly ran away, with its prize from the rubbish-heap still firmly held between its teeth. Chapman and Judge hurried after the animal. They may have been betting on the wildest chance, but both felt they ought not to let the dog get away before they had a chance to examine that scrap of cloth.

They presently managed to coax it to their feet, and while Judge patted the mongrel's head Chapman managed to get possession of its

pitiful little prize. It was a bigger piece of cloth than he had thought—a fragment of the sleeve of a woman's coat ripped off, apparently, at the shoulder.

Chapman and Judge, with their find, went off back to their lodgings. There Chapman ripped open the seam of the cloth, took the thing to pieces, and inside the shoulder padding he made a million-to-one discovery. It was a number, pencilled indelibly on the inside of the lining. A dyer's number.

That started a whole new range of inquiries—this time among dyeing establishments. The local ones were tried first, and they presently yielded results. For it was found that a coat bearing this number had been dyed for a Mrs. Caroline Seagrave Manton, who lived in Regent Street—only a few yards from the police-station, in point of fact—and was about thirty years of age.

Chapman promptly made a call at Mrs. Manton's house. It was her husband who answered the door. He seemed a decent enough fellow and very frank. He was sorry his caller could not see Mrs. Manton—she had gone off to stay with some friends in London, he said.

The detective explained why he was making the inquiry and Manton laughed easily. "It can't be Carrie," he said, plunging his hand into his pocket and producing some letters. "We've heard from her within the last few days—here are letters she has written to me—you can read them for yourself if you like."

The detective did like. He read the letters, and made a note of the London address they contained. On the face of it Manton's story appeared quite satisfactory. But Chapman had the feeling that there was a hole in it somewhere. And anyway it had, of course, to be checked.

So he made a telephone call to the Yard and a detective promptly went off to make a call at the supposed London address of Mrs. Manton. She was not there. Moreover, she had never been there.

What Chapman had to do now was to establish that the dead woman was Mrs. Manton. There was one way of doing that. Three months earlier, as part of the initial investigations when the body had been discovered, the finger-prints of the dead woman had been taken. Chapman now asked Superintendent Cherrill, the Yard's finger-print wizard, to come down to Luton and see what he could find in the home of Mrs. Manton.

Cherrill made the trip on the next train. In the Manton house he made straight for the pantry, as being the place where a housewife's finger-prints were most likely to be discovered. He found several, of course. The best was a thumb-print on a pickle bottle. It matched exactly a thumb-print taken from the hand of the dead woman.

Chapman was satisfied now, of course, as to identity. But he wanted to be satisfied beyond all possibility of doubt that it really was Manton who was the murderer. So he took up those letters the husband had so

freely produced and examined them anew. They purported to have come from the London suburb of Hampstead. There were several of them, all apparently written by the woman herself, describing how much she was enjoying her stay and recording her day-to-day activities. The word "Hampstead" appeared only once in each letter—in the address from which it was supposed to have been written. And in each case, Chapman noticed, it was spelt wrongly. The letter "p" was missing.

So Chapman gave Manton pen and paper and quietly asked him to write a few words. Then he asked him to write the word "Hampstead". And Manton fell into the trap. He wrote, without hesitation, "Hamstead". Whereupon he was arrested and charged with the murder of his wife.

He had committed that murder all right. When he saw the game was up he told Chapman all about it. He had killed her in a fit of temper, then had burned all her clothes and even her dentures in the kitchen stove, bundled her body into a sack and wheeled it on his cycle to the River Lea during the inky darkness of the black-out. That, he had thought, was the end of the matter, with luck. But a few days later he had made an alarming discovery. Whereas he had thought he had destroyed everything likely to lead to the identification of the body found in the river, he now, in a forgotten cupboard of the house, came across an old coat that had belonged to his wife. This, he decided, had to be destroyed too. So he tore it into pieces and threw the pieces away on the various rubbish and bomb-debris dumps here and there about the town. He did this after the dustbins and these dumps had all been searched by the police, and the pieces might well have never turned up as clues.

As to the letters supposed to have come from his wife in London—well, those he had written himself, making trips to Hampstead and posting them there so that they should carry the authentic postmarks.

Manton had planned pretty well, and might well have been forgiven for thinking himself free from the danger of detection. He would have been but for the chance that a little dog had rummaged about and found one of those pieces of cloth and had started to play with it. And, of course, had chanced to be spotted by Chapman of the Yard.

Manton was put on trial at Bedford Assizes and duly sentenced to death. But he never went to the scaffold. He was a man of thorough good character who had done excellent service in the war, and the quarrel with his wife that had ended fatally had been none of his seeking. There were, in short, sufficient extenuating circumstances to justify a reprieve, and that step was taken.

One last bizarre fact in this strange case must be recorded. It concerns that little dog whose gambols with a piece of cloth put Chapman, after three months of fruitless work and on the point of throwing up the sponge, at last on the right track.

That little dog was Manton's own canine pet.

CHAPTER XX

THE YELLOW HAND-BAG MYSTERY

OUTSTANDING among Britain's ace murder investigators is Chief Detective-Inspector Robert Henry Fabian, who both in London and the provinces has had during the last year or two an unusual run of successes in the solving of apparently baffling riddles.

Fabian is a tall, powerfully built man with a flair for boxing and cricket—and a modesty that will never let him talk of his famous cases. He possesses something else—a rare sense of humour that is worth its weight in gold when some case or other on which he may be engaged gets into a trying tangle of complications and seems to defy every single attempt to solve it.

Fabian's humour is infectious. He will keep his tiring assistant on their toes for weeks with cheery badinage and heartening quip, and at the end of it all they will find that Bob Fabian has solved one more bewildering crime puzzle with a joke and a smile.

One of Fabian's best cases of recent years may be called the Mystery of the Yellow Hand-bag. It illustrates once again the value of patient, never-tiring search and of the imaginative appraisal of clues.

Early one November morning in 1946 an elderly spinster named Dagmar Peters, who was by way of being rather eccentric and who lived in a shack-like home in the Kent countryside at a place called Hever, left to hitch-hike her way some score of miles into London.

She had done that before, many times. Her method was the simple one of getting on to the main road and thumbing a lift from some early-morning lorry-driver going the way she wanted.

On this occasion the next that was heard of Dagmar Peters was the discovery of her body in some undergrowth fringing the side of a road not many miles from her shack. She had been strangled, and there seemed such a complete absence of clues that the Kent police promptly called in the Yard.

So Fabian got one more case to probe. He started his inquiries, naturally enough, in that shack which the dead woman had called home, and he found that when she had left there she was carrying a hand-bag made of knitted yellow string. Now there was no sign of this hand-bag at the spot where the body was found, and a tooth-comb search of the undergrowth for a good way around failed to bring anything of the sort to light.

Fabian seized on this yellow hand-bag as his No. 1 clue. It had, he found, been made by the dead woman's sister, who lived many miles away in another part of the countryside. Fabian went over to see her.

She gave him a minute description of the bag she had knitted with yellow art string and told him just what stitches she had used.

As she talked Fabian had one of his flashes of inspiration. "Do you think you could knit another bag just like it?" he asked. "I mean an absolute facsimile of the one you knitted for Dagmar, identical right down to the last stitch?"

The sister smiled the smile of the proud craftswoman. "Of course," she replied. "The design is my own—I could knit it with my eyes closed. When would you want it?"

Now the essence of crime detection is speed. If the murderer had carried Dagmar's bag away with him, it was a clue that would hang him. He was therefore liable to destroy it at the first opportunity, even if he had not already done so—which, of course, was a chance Fabian was taking. If he still had it the instant need was to get it identified.

Fabian looked at his watch. "How many hours would you want to knit me the completed bag, the exact duplicate of the one you knitted for her?" he asked.

It was late afternoon. The sister considered for a moment or two. Then she looked Fabian straight in the eye. "If," she said, "you are asking me to do something that will help bring Dagmar's murderer to justice, you tell me just what you want."

Fabian told her what was in his mind. He got an instant response. The sister picked up her knitting needles and a ball of yellow art string even as she gave her reply. "Come back at breakfast-time," she said. "Your bag will be finished and waiting for you."

It was. And when he got it Fabian had not merely a detailed description of it made and circulated to every police-station; he had it photographed from every possible angle, and these pictures too were circulated, to police-stations and newspaper offices throughout the country.

Meanwhile Fabian and his assistants were up to their ears in the routine job of tracking down and interviewing all the lorry-drivers who had passed along that road beside which the body of Dagmar Peters had been found at about the time the police surgeon had decided she had been strangled.

It was an extremely busy road, leading straight from the heart of Kent into London, and there were hundreds and hundreds of lorries that had passed that way at the approximate time in question. More than 1,500 drivers were tracked down and questioned. Their statements were checked and cross-checked, but none provided the slenderest clue. Not one of the drivers had seen anything of Dagmar Peters or knew anything of her. And not one of them had seen anything suspicious during his run past the spot where it was judged she must have been strangled.

Fabian was not discouraged. He was pinning his faith to the pictures of that knitted string hand-bag with which he had flooded the

country. And presently he got his break. It consisted of a report from a village policeman that a sixteen-year-old farm worker had fished a yellow bag from a millpond near the cottage that was his home.

It was Dagmar's bag all right. Her sister identified it at the first glance. Fabian's job now was to find out how it had got into the millpond. That pond, as it happened, had been thoroughly searched some days earlier as part of the routine hunt for clues in the entire district. That, reasoned Fabian, meant that it had been thrown into some stream or brook feeding the millpond, and carried down by the current. The question was, which stream?

He got out survey maps for the whole district and pored over them. Quite a number of streams and rills ran into that fairly large pond, and they covered quite a wide area. Going back to the point that the bag would only have reached the pond within the previous ninety-six hours, the detective took time off to have a chat with an expert on the subject of river currents.

As a result of that chat half a dozen men who knew what they were about were given the job of charting the speed and direction of the currents in every stream in the locality of the pond. This work took a week, and the results were studied by Fabian's expert. At the end he was able to tell the detective that calculations based on the time the pond was searched and the speeds of currents showed that there was one spot and one spot only where the bag of Dagmar Peters could have been flung into the water. And that spot was near a factory.

A factory, Fabian saw in a flash, meant lorry drivers delivering supplies. So he sent once more for the 1,500 statements that had been painstakingly set down from lorry drivers, and sat down to read them anew. What he was now looking for was something that would link one of these drivers with the factory that had been pin-pointed by the expert.

Presently he found the answer he sought. One of the lorry drivers had, it seemed, delivered a load of bricks to this factory some hours after the time the pathologists had decided Dagmar Peters had been strangled. His name was Sydney Sinclair.

Fabian's next step was pure routine. A matter of a 'phone call to the Criminal Records Office at the Yard. Was anything known of "Sydney Sinclair, lorry driver"? Something was. Sydney Sinclair, came the answer within the hour, was known as "The Basher" and had something of a record—no fewer than sixteen convictions, in fact, for larceny and assault.

Fabian knew then that he had found his man. Sinclair was living down in Essex by now, and felt reasonably safe—for something like five months had gone by since that morning when Dagmar Peters had met her death. He was startled when the detectives arrested him, but philosophic when he realized the game was quite up. His story was that Peters had first asked him for money and when refused had stolen

his wallet, that he had then seized her and that she had died on his hands. Whether there was any grain of truth in that story or not, the quick-tempered "Basher" had committed murder, and he paid the grim penalty for that crime.

In real life as in fiction quite slender clues can prove enough to hang a man, of course. Grains of dust and strands of hair will do the trick—if their story be seen and read aright.

It was from a tuft of buried hair that had once belonged to an attractive young girl that another famous Yard murder ace solved a war-time riddle that will go down in British crime annals as the "Wigwam Murder"—an odd, bizarre story that marks it out from all the rest for many reasons.

The story began with the discovery, one summer day in 1942, of the body of a young girl buried in the light sandy soil of a common in Surrey. Godalming was the area, and the Surrey police were prompt in calling in the help of the Yard to solve the riddle of the girl's death.

The chief detective-inspector who was sent down was Edward Greeno—he has since been made a superintendent—and the detective-sergeant he took with him was Frederick Hodge—who is now an inspector. These two made a team that had no equal even at the Yard. With a record of solving nine murder mysteries in a row they had the reputation of never failing to get their man.

When they got to Godalming they found the case was bristling with difficulties. To start with there was not the slightest clue to the identity of the dead girl. Her body had been found under only a light covering of soil, but the head had been so badly battered that the features were quite unrecognizable. The ground had been used a good deal for tank practice and it was at first thought the girl might have been knocked down by one of these battle vehicles and buried by its wheels. Certainly at first sight there seemed no certain way of deciding just how she had been killed.

Greeno asked right away for the services of a Home Office pathologist, and down to Godalming went Dr. Keith Simpson. He saw that the work of reconstruction was going to be a long and delicate affair and accordingly took the unusual course of having the remains removed to his London laboratory. And there he set to work.

Presently he was able to tell the detective that the girl had been stabbed—but that he had not completed his work of reconstructing the body—and especially the skull. The latter was quite a job. It was in no fewer than twenty separate pieces. These the pathologist with infinite patience fitted together, until he had the skull more or less complete. When the pieces were all assembled the completed job showed a jagged groove. That was where the girl had been savagely struck on the head with a piece of wood. It was that, the pathologist told the detective, that had killed her—that and not the knife wound.

But who was she? That was the paramount riddle with which Greeno was faced. The only tangible thing he had to help him solve this riddle was a tuft of human hair which Keith Simpson handed to him. There was not much of it, and the hair was not long. It was blonde in colour, and after pondering the matter Greeno came to the conclusion that in life the girl might well have been an Eton-cropped girl —that is, one who wore her hair cropped short at the back, like a boy.

The idea was good enough for a starting-point, at any rate—and in any case there was nothing better. So Greeno and the men working under him began to cast about for news of an Eton-cropped blonde girl who might have been living in the district and who was now missing.

Meanwhile, of course, all as part of the routine in a murder hunt, every inch of the ground near where the girl's shallow grave had been dug was combed and combed again, scrub and undergrowth was cut and soil sifted in the search for a clue of any sort. Particularly did Greeno want to lay hands on the knife with which the girl had been stabbed. But nothing of the sort was found. At least, nothing was reported as having been found. Greeno, however, had the fixed idea that the knife must be lying somewhere around, and ordered a fresh search all over again. He also had all the searchers questioned just to make sure they had not come across something they might not have regarded as being at all worth reporting yet which might just the same turn out to be a useful clue—or the clue to a clue.

It was then that a discovery was made of a happening that might have thrown the entire investigation hopelessly off the scent. For on his second round of searching inquiry Greeno learned of the incredible fact that a man engaged in the search had actually found a knife but, thinking it to be of no importance, had put it first in his jacket pocket and then a little later had tossed it idly away somewhere in the undergrowth—quite a way from the spot where he had originally picked it up.

Greeno's reaction to this can be better imagined than described. But no one knows better than a Scotland Yard murder investigator that the vagaries of the human mind are beyond all normal charting. All the anger in the world would not mend the matter. What had to be done now was to find the knife in its new hiding-place. To do that a whole new area of undergrowth was cut down and combed. To help in the work Army mine-detectors were employed. But the knife had vanished. Clue or no clue, it was never seen again.

Greeno's search for clues in the common scrub, therefore, met with no luck at all. But he had better fortune with his efforts to get the dead girl identified. That tuft of blonde hair did the trick. Inquiries brought to light a countryman who spoke of a strange girl with fair cropped hair who had been living in a little hut built of wood and sticks in some woods not far away—a hut that was not unlike an American Indian's wigwam in build and fashioning.

With the countryman as guide, Greeno and Hodge found this hut in the heart of the woods. It now had no occupants, but there were signs that it had had, and not too long previously. On the walls, scrawled in pencil, were many names. All seemed to be the names of men, most of them soldiers. But among the scrawls was a girl's name. It was the name Pearl Wolfe.

So the detectives began to look for Pearl Wolfe. That was a search that spread far from Godalming and this Surrey wood. It brought forth the information that Pearl Wolfe was a young girl who had been brought up in a convent on the South coast and who had been missing from her home for many months. She had, in other words, obviously run away from home. From the reconstructed picture of the girl who had been killed and buried, those who knew Pearl Wolfe were able to identify her as the victim.

Greeno was now very busy, and was keeping the men working with him very busy. For the men whose names were scrawled with Pearl's on the walls of her wigwam had all to be tracked down and questioned. That was done. There were many camps round about, and most of the men were soldiers, spending their days training for battle.

At one of the camps was a French-Canadian private named August Sangret—a tall, lithe young fellow who was described as looking something like a Red Indian and who, investigation showed, had often been seen in the company of the blonde girl. When the detectives questioned him they found his replies to be unsatisfactory. His battle-dress was taken away to a laboratory for examination and was found to have on it bloodstains—the stains of blood belonging to the same blood group as that of the dead girl. Something else was found—two short hairs—identical in colour and texture with the hairs in that short tuft that had been found in the shallow grave.

Sangret, in the course of the inquiries, was given the opportunity of visiting that spot—but he shied away from the suggestion. His rather lame excuse was that he had never been there and had no wish to go there.

The detectives searched his billet with a tooth-comb, and the buildings near his billet. And in a drain-pipe they found a knife—a knife with a curving blade. Greeno was glad to get his hands on that knife—and savage when he thought of that other knife one of the searchers had thrown away near the scene of the grave. He could foresee the play that would be made with a point of that sort by an astute defence counsel if the question of the stabbing became a vital element in the evidence against Sangret.

But it never did. Keith Simpson was quite definite on the fact that the girl had really been killed by a series of savage blows on the head with a piece of wood. And among the things that were found near the wigwam was a piece of birch which Keith Simpson declared fitted exactly into a jagged groove in the girl's reconstituted skull—the skull he had built up again from its twenty fragments.

It was not difficult now to reconstruct what had happened. The girl, who had been living a queer sort of life in this hut in the wood, had got involved in a quarrel with Sangret, and had been stabbed, though not fatally. Terrified, she had taken to her heels in the woods, and had been followed and, as she ran, battered to death with the rough birch-branch cudgel wielded by the lithe "Red Indian" Sangret.

The French-Canadian paid for his crime on the gallows. Tracking him down had taken Greeno and Hodge five long months—five months of difficulty and false trails. But for their dogged patience—and the brilliant laboratory work of a young pathologist—the killing of this good-looking young girl of superior education, who had preferred a wild and unconventional life in a home-made house in the woods to the more normal existence of other girls of her age, would have remained a mystery.

The riddle of her murder, indeed, would never have been solved had it not been for a little tuft of blonde hair and two scrawled names on the wall of the "wigwam" where she had lived a day-dream life of what she thought was romance.

Neither would it have been solved had not the Surrey police taken that prompt step of calling in Scotland Yard as soon as it was plain a murder of unusual complexity was on their hands.

For, though it did not directly affect the issue in the end, the throwing away of the knife found on the scene of the crime is as good an illustration as could be provided of the wisdom of getting really skilled murder investigators on the job as soon as ever it is possible to get them there.

CHAPTER XXI

"MY LIFE HAS BEEN ALL WINTER"

THE world of crime is studded with "ifs". Many a murder, and often the solution to a murder riddle, would never have eventuated but for the chance flicking into play of this or that card by the unpredictable hand of Fate.

If, for instance, a young American paratrooper named Karl Gustave Holten, training in England for the hazards of "D" Day, had not chanced to meet in a London café a young night-club dancer named Elizabeth Marina Jones, and if he had not run short of money and she had not talked of a longing for "something exciting"—well, the chances are that Holten, a steady enough young shoe salesman before he became a G.I., would never have shot a taxi-driver on the fringe of London one dark night and perished on the scaffold as a murderer.

And if he had not sauntered back in the early hours of the morning to a car he had left parked in a *cul-de-sac*; if, further, Scotland Yard's Detective-Inspector W. Tarr—now chief inspector—had not, on the hunch that all good detectives have and listen to, decided to leave the car there, where it had been found, for him to saunter back to—well, there might have been a very different ending to the case that hit the headlines of both Britain and the United States as "The Cleft Chin Murder".

They called it that because the victim, a hire-car driver named George Edward Heath, who hailed from the south side of London, had a dimpled, or "cleft", chin.

Holten was twenty-two; the girl, whose home was in the Welsh mining valleys, was but eighteen. When the couple met the soldier was an absentee from his unit, and feeling just a bit reckless. So was the girl, who had run off to London to seek glamour and had only found tawdriness and uncertainty. Talk drifted to films and from films to gangsters. "I'd like to do something exciting," said the girl. "And so you shall," said the paratrooper. The next day he stole a United States Army lorry and the pair set off together on a lively but brief little series of armed hold-ups.

Back in London, and wanting money, they picked up Driver Heath one night some little time after midnight, and got him to drive them to Staines, on the outskirts of London. When they got there Holten shot Heath through the back of the head and, after the girl had gone through the dead man's pockets, the body was dumped by the side of the road, while the couple drove back to Hammersmith.

When Heath's body was found there were not many clues. There

was just the shot body of a man. Not even the bullet was there. But the routine step was to get the body identified. A detailed description of the dead man, flashed to all London stations, soon brought the answer to that initial question, also the number and description of the car he owned. The next thing was to find the car. Its description was circulated throughout London and all over the South of England, but it seemed to have vanished.

But not for long. A patrolling policeman found it in a *cul-de-sac* there in Hammersmith. Now in the usual course of things the car would have had a special wheel fitted over the steering-wheel—to preserve any finger-prints—and been driven off to the Hammersmith police-station for full examination. In this case, however, Detective-Inspector Tarr, who was in charge of the inquiries, had a hunch that it would pay to leave the car where it was and see what happened. It might be a million-to-one chance on the murderer returning to the car which he had seemingly abandoned. But if it came off the chance would have been well worth taking.

Well, it did come off. Holten walked blindly into the trap in the early hours of the morning, and was seized without ever having a chance to draw the fully loaded pistol he carried. He had a story ready. He was, he said, a deserter, had found the car out in the country, had driven it into London, and knew nothing whatever about the murder of Heath. He put up an alibi to that charge, and to support that alibi he gave the name of the girl Jones.

She was promptly found and questioned, and told the detectives a good deal more than they already knew. The end of it all was that the couple were tried for murder and sentenced to death. Holten was duly hanged, but the girl was reprieved, getting a life sentence instead.

Holten went to his end bravely enough. When he left Wormwood Scrubs prison for Pentonville, where he was to be executed the next morning, he insisted on shaking hands with all his guards, and as he stepped into the car that was to take him for his last ride he smiled and waved a cheery farewell to them.

In the early stages of the investigation that laid this couple by the heels G-men with the United States Security Police co-operated with the Scotland Yard detectives. A special arrangement had to be made with the United States authorities so that Holten could be tried for murder by a British Court. Actually he was the only United States soldier to be hanged by the British during the whole war.

In point of fact the United States soldiers who were in Britain during the war years gave the British police far less trouble than any other foreign or overseas soldiers stationed in the country. The few who did commit criminal offences in Britain were handed over to the United States authorities and dealt with by them under a special agreement between the two countries.

Scotland Yard does not, of course, solve all its murder riddles.

There is one, for instance, that occurred at the end of 1945, which still bears the red-ink mark "Unsolved" on its dossier, yet the answer to which some Scotland Yard officers do not consider so obscure as that single word may suggest.

The case was that of the shooting of a night taxi-cab-driver named Frank Everitt, who was fifty-six, and had been a policeman and a private detective before taking the wheel of his cab. By virtue of his calling he was fairly well known in the night life of London, and quite a lot of people knew him by his nickname of "the Duke".

Well "the Duke" was found at dawn one October morning, shot through the head and huddled in a fire service pump-house on Lambeth Bridge. A few hours later his cab was found abandoned on a piece of waste land at Notting Hill Gate.

It was established that he had been shot shortly after midnight and that round about midnight he had been seen to pick up fares in the West End—one of them an American soldier. There seemed to be no real clues in this case, though the detective who was in charge of the inquiries was the same Bill Chapman whose work in the Luton case I have already described and who has not earned the soubriquet of "the Terrier" for nothing.

No clues, but plenty of theories. As, for instance, that "the Duke" was a police informer; that he was just a night taxi-driver who had innocently enough learned of some gang activity or other and had therefore been prudently silenced; that he himself was mixed up with some black-market gang or other, and that he had been bumped off by rival gangsters. All these and other tales were told, but there was never a shred of evidence forthcoming to support any of them.

Then, after a fortnight, there occurred a second murder. The victim this time was a Russian named Reuben Martirosoff, a man known both to the police and to London's underworld as "Russian Robert". He had been found in the early hours of the morning slumped over the wheel of a small saloon car in a street in Notting Hill Gate, and he had been shot through the head. The doctors said he had been shot an hour or two after midnight.

Now there were a lot of points of similarity between this murder and the killing of "the Duke". Both crimes had been committed in the fog of very early morning; both men had been shot in the back of the head at close range; the Russian's car and "the Duke's" taxi had been found within a mile of each other; each had been abandoned with its lights on. Was there any link between the two killings? Chief Detective-Inspector C. A. Somerset, who was given the job of investigating the second killing, had a long talk with "Terrier" Chapman and tried to find one. But it seemed purely a matter of theory that such a link might exist.

Martirosoff was a man whose name was already in the Yard records. He was, in fact, chief of one of the most expert gangs of jewel

thieves and black marketeers operating in London. Though, in the neighbourhood where he lived, he was regarded as a prosperous business man, going off to business early in the morning and returning late at night, he was the brains behind quite a number of important jewel robberies.

Somerset soon discovered that the night before he was found murdered he was in a night club with two members of his gang, and that high words had passed between the trio. The two gangsters were quickly traced. They proved to be two Poles named Marian Grondkowski and Henryk Malinowski, who had both deserted from their Service units in Scotland and journeyed to London to link up with "Russian Robert's" outfit.

The story each told tallied save in one vital detail. That story was that they had carried out a number of robberies for the Russian but that each time he had reduced their cut. And so, when they saw him in the club, and watched him tuck a nice wad of £500 in notes in his pocket, they decided to rob him. They persuaded him to give them a lift in his car, and on the way attempted to force him to hand over the money, one producing a revolver. When the Russian stoutly declined to part with his cash he was shot. That was the story. The only change in it each of the Poles made was that it was the other who had held the revolver and pulled the trigger.

Well, they were both hanged. And they died without furnishing the answer to the question that was nagging away in the mind of "Terrier" Chapman. Had they had anything to do with the shooting of "Duke" Everitt? The night before the two Poles were executed Chapman paid a visit to them in the condemned cells of Wandsworth. The couple were standing then on the very brink of death, and both of them stoutly denied knowing anything at all of Everitt's murder. Whether that denial was genuine or not is anyone's guess.

A first-class example of what can be done by high-powered detective work was seen at the beginning of 1947, when Scotland Yard was faced with the job of bringing to book the murderers of a motorcyclist named Alec d'Antiquis, who was struck down by a bullet fired from the gun of a trio of young desperadoes who had been thwarted in an attempted hold-up of a jeweller's shop in the heart of London.

From the crime point of view the attempted coup was a badly bungled piece of work. Nevertheless, it was evident that three very desperate young men were at liberty. They had managed to get clear away from the scene of their attempted robbery and their shooting without apparently leaving a single clue, though the affair had happened in Tottenham Court Road, one of London's busiest thoroughfares, and in broad daylight to boot.

There is no need to go over the details of this recent crime. What I can reveal here, however, is that it was purely through alert and searching detective work that the three desperadoes, who had apparently

vanished into thin air, were tracked down and made to pay the penalty for their crimes. Two of those young men went to the scaffold. The third is now in gaol.

The d'Antiquis case brought into action the entire aid of every one of Scotland Yard's many expert departments. But the thing that really broke the case was the discovery of a mackintosh that had been flung away by one of the desperadoes in his flight—and the linking of the young man with this garment.

Now none of this was as easy as it sounds. Fabian was the man in charge of the investigation, which was widespread and intense, and scores of reports came to his desk—statements from passers-by, suspects who had been rounded up on chance, released convicts asked to account for their time on the afternoon of the shooting, and the like.

Among this volume of statements Fabian picked out the story of a taxi-driver who said a hatless man wearing a mackintosh had jumped on to his running-board a few minutes after the shooting, had been pushed off again and had vanished in the crowd. So the word went out for a search to be made for an abandoned mackintosh, for Fabian had reasoned, again with one of those flashes of intuition that makes the complete detective, that a man in flight might well abandon a garment so distinctive.

If that mackintosh had been abandoned it would have been disposed of somewhere fairly close to the shooting. Where? Fabian thought any one of the many blocks of buildings in the vicinity might well be searched. And he proved right. For in a block of offices just off Tottenham Court Road a dirty mackintosh was surely found, rolled up and tucked away under a little-used counter in a storeroom. In the pocket of the garment was found a cap, a pair of gloves and a mask. What had clearly happened was that one of the men in full flight had taken a chance on nipping into this office building, finding a temporarily unoccupied room and dumping a garment that would identify him.

Holding the mackintosh in his hand, Fabian saw that there was nothing very distinctive about it at all. It was the type of which tens of thousands had been issued to demobilized Servicemen, and which could be freely purchased in any one of thousands of shops up and down Britain.

But Fabian was determined to make this mackintosh "talk" if he could. He had the garment torn apart, stripped into pieces. And stitched under the lining of the armpit he found a manufacturer's stock label—in code, of course. The detective's next move was to call in trade experts, and in this way he discovered that the mackintosh had been made by a Leeds firm.

So a detective was sent up to Leeds. A search of the records showed that this particular mackintosh had been one of a batch sent a good while previously to shops in the Bermondsey district. That meant a

shop-to-shop check in Bermondsey and neighbourhood. The detectives making this check found that most assistants, as a precaution against forged clothing coupons and also with an eye to possible future business, made a note of the purchaser's name and address from his clothing book. That practice had been followed when this particular mackintosh had been bought.

There was the name. The detective who copied it down went off back to the Yard and had the Criminal Records Office at work within a matter of minutes. But they drew a blank. The name of the purchaser was not in the police records. He was, therefore, no known criminal—unless, of course, he had given a fictitious name and address to the clothier. That, in fact, proved later to be just what had been done. Fabian was not nonplussed. He went ahead and had the purchaser tracked down and interviewed. He proved to be a perfectly innocent man. But Fabian, persisting in his questioning, learned that the owner of the mackintosh had lent it some time earlier to a relative. That relative was a young man named Charles Henry Jenkins.

When he heard the name Jenkins, Fabian knew he was at last getting somewhere for young Jenkins was a desperate fellow who had been released from Borstal only six short days before the d'Antiquis shooting. So they went after Jenkins. Yes, he admitted freely enough, he had borrowed the mackintosh, but he in his turn had lent it to a man. He gave his name, too. It was that of a man who, as was afterwards discovered, the gang believed had double-crossed them out of £5,000 worth of loot from another robbery he had been trusted with to dispose of. Jenkins himself was put up for identification. He came through that test with flying colours and was released.

But he was shadowed in the days that followed. And the detectives noticed that he, a young fellow of seventeen named Terence John Peter Rolt and a 20-year-old youth named Christopher James Geraghty were all members of a gang which met regularly in a King's Cross café to plan hold-ups. Fabian decided to arrest all three. And when they were questioned, Rolt and Geraghty both admitted they had been present at the hold-up that had led to the death of Alec d'Antiquis. Geraghty, in fact, admitted that the bullet which had killed this motor-cyclist had come from his gun. It had, he said, been fired to frighten, not to kill.

Professional criminals, of course, rarely end their careers by committing murder. One who did was a man of 62 named Harold Dorrien Trevor, who for years was known to Scotland Yard officers as "The Monocled Man". He had a criminal record that extended over 46 years, and as a crook was a rank failure, since he never failed to fall into police hands with almost anything he touched.

He had come to London as a young man with a plan. That plan was to launch out on a criminal career on a big scale. To carry out this plan he came attired in top hat, morning coat, white spats and a monocle. And within a few days he was in police hands—on a pitiful little charge

of stealing a woman's hand-bag. That began spells of activity that always ended in gaol. But during his brief spells of liberty he managed to live in something like luxury, all on the proceeds of petty thefts or unimaginative pieces of chicanery.

Penal servitude eventually claimed him. And it was on his release from his last sentence of this kind that he committed the crime which sent him to the gallows. He had, in fact, been at liberty only ten days when, in the guise of a representative of a firm of London estate agents, he called on an elderly Kensington widow who was desirous of letting her flat. Trevor's plan was the old one of getting into an abode and slipping into his pocket any unconsidered trifles he might be able to pick up. He was a smooth-tongued rogue and usually managed to pull off little coups of this kind without much difficulty.

This time it was different, however. Left alone in a room for a minute or two, Trevor was in the act of slipping a few silver knick-knacks into his pocket when he was surprised by the widow, whose name was Theodora Greenhill and whose husband had been an Army officer. Trevor tried once more the smooth-tongued bluff that had got him out of earlier difficult situations. Mrs. Greenhill, who was 65, was, however, not to be bluffed. She bluntly expressed her intention of sending for the police. And Trevor, who, remember, only ten days earlier had stepped from the prison gates, completely lost his head as the vision of so quick a return to durance vile rose before him.

He had never, in the whole course of his life of crime, once been known to use violence of any kind. This time it was different. He placed his hand on the widow's arm and endeavoured to stop her leaving the room to carry out her announced intention of calling a policeman. That began it. There was a brief struggle, and when it ended Trevor found what many other men had found before him: that the taking of human life in some sudden, unguarded fit of rage is a startlingly easy thing to do.

As he gazed down, horrified, at the dead body of the widow, but one thought flooded his mind. That was to get away from the scene as quickly as possible. So he picked up his hat and went. It shows the "accidental" measure of his crime that he did not even wait to make sure he had not left any clues as to his identity behind. He just left—and was lucky to the extent that no one saw him go.

He went straight off to a London railway-station and took a ticket for a town in the provinces. That night he slept in a guest-house. And that same night a hue and cry was launched for him, and his description and all his aliases were broadcast to the police of the entire country.

For there was not the slightest doubt as to who had killed Widow Greenhill. The Scotland Yard detectives who had been called to the flat as soon as the crime had been discovered—and that was not very long after Trevor had found himself a seat in the train that was to speed him away to temporary safety—had found the business of identifying

him with the murder a matter of absurd ease. Not only were there complete sets of his finger-prints on a dozen articles in the room of death. There, on the table where Mrs. Greenhill had left it, still lay his visiting-card, with a pencilled note in his own undisguised handwriting on the back.

Tracking him down and arresting him was not a long or difficult job. And it was then that a real-life O. Henry ending to the story of "The Monocled Man" became revealed. Trevor had once told a detective who had arrested him that he had one ambition, and one ambition only. That was to carry out one really big worthwhile robbery that would provide him with sufficient funds to enable him to retire nicely provided for for the rest of his life. Well, that night he spent in the guest-house, with the hounds of justice already baying at his heels, was the night of the greatest chance he had ever had of making that ambition come true. For hidden in the mattress of the bed that was given him was a fortune of several thousand pounds all in handy £1 notes. It had been hidden there for safety in the event of a possible air-raid. And Trevor had actually slept on the fortune he had always sought and never come within an ace of acquiring—without for one second realizing it.

When Trevor was told of the trick fickle Fate had played him, he said no word, but merely smiled a thin wintry smile of chagrin. To him the happening was in keeping with all the other things that he had known right through his life. And when, standing in the Old Bailey dock, he heard himself found guilty of the murder of Mrs. Greenhill and saw the slip of black silk being placed on the white wig of the judge and knew he was about to be sentenced to death, he had his last moment to take the stage, and seized it. For, very quietly, and with great dignity, he delivered, standing there in the dock and looking directly into the eyes of the judge, one of the most eloquent little speeches ever heard from that grim and sinister platform.

"I would like," he began, "once and for all, as a man who is standing himself at the door of Death, to say I have no knowledge of this lady's death.

"Even as I am speaking the moving finger is writing on the wall—and the words, once written, can never be recalled. I sincerely hope that each one of you gentlemen of the jury, and the judge too in passing sentence, will remember these words; that when, each one of you, as you surely must some day, yourselves, stand before a Higher Tribunal, you will receive a greater measure of mercy than has been meted out to me in this world. My life has been all winter."

And the old Court was still for many dramatic moments until the judge began to speak the dread words that consigned Harold Dorrien Trevor, the crook who always lost, to death on the scaffold.

CHAPTER XXII

WHAT A CROOK MAKES

THEY get some queer letters at the Yard. Every murder case that happens brings its shoals of missives from anonymous correspondents who firmly believe they have hit upon a clue to the truth or who, for some obscure reason, feel themselves compelled to "confess" to a crime with which they cannot have had even the remotest connection.

Most of the letters of this kind are handled by the Criminal Investigation Department, and each one is carefully gone into on the off-chance that some useful germ of a clue may emerge.

Another heavy post-bag goes each day to the room of the Yard's Secretary, an Old Etonian named Richard Leofric Jackson, who was a heavyweight boxer when he was at Cambridge University and who afterwards became a barrister. He gets the letters of complaints, the letters containing genuine suggestions for bettering police arrangements, all the queries from far and near about Scotland Yard, its work and its personnel.

In his post-bag, too, are the letters from the cranks and the people with odd ideas. There was a man, for instance, who regularly, week by week, wrote a letter bitterly complaining that Yard detectives were stationed on the roof of the building for the express purpose of spying on him as he walked along the Embankment each morning on his way to his office, and that they signalled to other watching officers as he passed. He stoutly refused to accept a firm denial that this was being done, and only stopped his complaints after he had received a diplomatic and very polite official letter telling him that the men had been withdrawn!

There was another individual who, during the late war, gave a highly circumstantial account of how a neighbouring woman had trained her cockerels to crow in Morse and thus give signals of importance to German spies hidden in some nearby woods.

And there was the man who kept calling at the Yard with a small tin box containing sometimes a tiny piece of bacon and at other times a small piece of bread. His story was that the waitresses at the restaurant where he ate were trying to poison him because he did not give big enough tips. In the box, he declared, was the evidence. And he would not be satisfied until a senior officer gave instructions for the box to be taken solemnly away and its contents analysed by one of the Yard experts. He was then, very officially, informed that the tests had proved negative, and went away content.

Crooks, as a class, are an odd lot. A famous Yard detective once

confessed to me, after a quarter of a century's close contact with the London underworld, that he had quite failed to understand completely the psychology of the regular crook. He had arrested thousands of criminals in his day. But when I asked him if he could explain just why men became criminals, and why, when they did, they committed acts which were just plain stupid and went on being stupid, he could do no more than shake his head in despair of finding the answer and say, "There's none so funny as folk."

The professional crook, I suppose, deliberately sets out to lead a life of crime, hoping right from the beginning to make a fortune out of it. He may be influenced in his choice of a career by the exciting prospect of being able to pit his wits against those of the police. His ego will give him the assurance that he can never be caught. If he is, he will come out of prison convinced that he is far too smart ever to be caught a second time.

Does crime pay? There are figures which would seem to show it does—sometimes. In 1946 London thieves managed to get away with property valued at £4,360,000. Of this £777,000 worth was recovered. There are plenty of cases where crooks manage to get away with thousands of pounds' worth of loot before being laid by the heels. But generally, with the criminal fraternity it is a case of easy come, easy go. However big the coup, the average crook will within a week or two have only an odd pound or two left, if even that. The rest will have gone on gambling, or a round of hectic living. Very few seem to have the commonsense to put some of their ill-gotten cash away for the inevitable rainy day. The majority, when caught, generally have not enough to enable them to pay a lawyer to defend them.

Some of the exceptions make interesting study. A case that comes readily to mind is that of two men and a woman who stole £18,000 worth of furs some little time ago. They were all sentenced to two years' imprisonment. But the men had provided for those lean years. Each had hidden a little matter of £6,000—hidden where it has never been discovered by the police. That gives them an income for their two years' imprisonment of £3,000 a year, free of income tax and with board and lodging thrown in. From their point of view crime is certainly a paying proposition.

The most long-headed man I know amassed many thousands of pounds by organizing and running a gang to specialize in the theft of motor-cars. The gang stole thousands of cars from the streets of London and other cities, altered them in secret workshops, and sold them again. The leader did very well indeed out of that. He invested his very considerable share of the profits in North of England house property. Then he settled down to enjoy a life of quiet, unworried retirement.

But he had scarcely settled down before the Justice he had dodged for years caught up with him. Today he is serving a sentence of five

years. His accumulating rents will be waiting for him when he comes out of gaol, and I have no doubt he will consider his profits well worth the five years of penal servitude he is serving.

The finance of crime, of course, is a fascinating subject. There are shop-breakers and jewel thieves who, if they can manage to keep out of gaol for a year, can make up to £6,000 in that period. In the prosperous days before the war a confidence trickster could reckon on making an average of £5,000 a year without much trouble, while the average jewel thief, a man really good at his job, could reckon on £1,500 a year. Times, of course, have changed a good deal. In crime, as in other walks of life, values and profits have been turned topsy-turvy.

And after all, however big the coup that is pulled off, the cash results are by no means all profit. Say a gang gets away with £5,000 worth of loot in one night's raid. That sounds pretty good. But then that raid will have taken long months to plan, and there are always a lot of people other than the actual thieves who have got to be taken care of.

There are the spotters, for instance; they will have to have their share, as well as informants and helpers of various kinds. Not to speak of the girl friends of the various members of the gang, and a whole cohort of hangers-on, each one of whom will have to have his or her silence bought.

At the end of it all the receiver will give only one-tenth of the value of the property, leaving £500 or even less to be divided among the entire gang. I have known a gang to spend as much as a couple of months perfecting a fairly big robbery, and drawing a matter of only £30 apiece from the coup in the final share-out.

Forgers seem to be the poorest paid of the whole lot. By and large, a forger has to be a real expert to get an income of £8 a week. Which, when one considers the risks, is by no means good recompense.

The truth is, of course, that the people who really do make money from crime, year in and year out, are the receivers. A receiver in a steady way of business will make £5,000 a year clear profit with very little risk. Crooks hardly ever give a receiver away, and catching a receiver is as hard a task as any the Yard detective is faced with.

It is the receivers who are the master minds behind the big-time criminal gangs, and without them, of course, crime, in any city, would be cut to a minimum. It is the receiver who finds the "big job", employs agents in social circles to report on the comings and goings of selected victims, what valuables they have and where they keep them, engages the services of an entire gang or an individual jewel or other thief at a fixed fee, and who, after the job is done, disposes of the loot swiftly through channels that are rarely traced.

Some receivers make it a point never to allow their home or their business address to become known to the crooks with whom they deal—

and the business the receiver will be running as a "front" will be some jewellery or other establishment conducted on scrupulously honest lines. A receiver of this type will be careful to meet his crook contacts in some West End club or maybe in some obscure suburban billiards hall—never, perhaps, meeting in the same place twice. But at these careful meetings a deal will be arranged and a meeting-spot fixed at which the loot can be handed over and paid for on the nail within a matter of minutes after the actual theft.

Yes, the receiver is a very wily bird. He has got to be. I know one who always chooses a post-office as his meeting-place for the receipt of stolen property—in this case jewellery. On the very second of his appointment he will drive silently up in his car, all set to take over the jewellery and pay out. If the crook is there everything will be all right. But should the crook be a fraction late he will be unlucky. The receiver will wait exactly thirty seconds, never more nor less. If the man he has come to meet has not turned up by then, it is just too bad. The receiver will be back in his car and away without a backward glance. Doing business that way has kept this particular receiver out of gaol for years.

The dyed-in-the-wool crook will never let a receiver down, never give him away to the police. It would not pay to do that, for the crook who squealed on a receiver would never find another market for his loot. Similarly, receivers rarely let down the crooks with whom they do business—although there have been occasions when a crook, guilty of a careless slip likely to have the effect of involving the fence in police inquiries, or perhaps rather more pressing in his demands for a bigger "cut" than the receiver is prepared to tolerate, has been quietly made the subject of a roundabout tip-off to the Yard to ensure that he is caught and put safely out of the way before he can do any harm.

London's underworld is practically controlled by a small group of not more than a dozen No. 1 receivers. Their identities are all known to the Yard, but they operate far too cleverly to be caught, though the battle of wits between them and the detectives goes on relentlessly week after week and month after month. Every now and again a warrant will be obtained by a Yard detective and the home of one or other of this little band of receivers will be searched, as well as any business or other premises with which he may be associated. The result is always the same—there is never anything of an incriminating nature discovered. No one would be more surprised than the detectives making the search if the result was otherwise.

Often have the Yard men sought the aid of police abroad in the hope of being able to track down the agents of these receivers, and watch is constantly kept at the ports, especially when boats are leaving for South America, for signs of stolen jewellery and other loot which it is shrewdly suspected is always being smuggled out of Britain. But the receivers and all the men they employ are wily men, and the long-looked-for evidence is never found.

It is estimated that all the receivers of London handle between them stolen property worth more than half a million pounds every year. Generally it is disposed of by being broken from its settings, which are then melted down instantly and, either re-set or un-set, disposed of to agents in various parts of the country as a first step towards getting it to the Continent or to the United States. So slick are the receivers and so smooth and well-laid their plans that jewellery stolen in London will be broken up and in other hands hundreds of miles from London within twenty-four hours of the property having been stolen.

These receivers, then, are the people who really make crime pay. So far as cash returns go, that is. In other ways there is a penalty they can never escape—the constant nagging fear that one day the men of the Yard will surely catch up with them, or that some crook or other, more daring than his fellows, will make no bones about launching a blackmail plot against them.

I have yet to hear of a "generous" receiver. All of them trade unblushingly on the fact that the crook, who, not working "by the job" or for any big underworld organization, has pulled off some coup of his own, has two prime urges immediately afterwards. The first is to get the stolen property off his hands as speedily as ever he can. The second is to get hard cash for it. Only the receiver can help him here, and the receiver knows the crook has no option at all but to take just what he is given—and like it.

I know of one receiver who came sadly to grief directly as a result of the miserly streak in him—a streak that grew more pronounced with the years. There had been a robbery at a big country house and a valuable quantity of jewellery had been taken. The Yard was called in, but after spending several days investigating every possible angle and interrogating all the servants the detectives were utterly without a clue or a suspect. The job had all the marks of having been the work of an expert jewel thief, who had managed to hide his tracks with unusual skill.

The truth, as it came to light later, was a very different story. The jewellery had actually been stolen by a boy servant at the house, who had hidden it so cleverly that the Yard detectives were completely bluffed. When all the inquiring and questioning had died down the boy slipped off to London and called at the little shop of a jeweller whom he had met some time previously and who had then told him that he was ready to buy any trinkets the boy might come by if he should find himself short of cash, and whose address the boy had consequently kept by him.

The little jeweller, of course, was a receiver who had thus adroitly planted the idea of a theft in the mind of the boy. Now the idea was bearing fruit—fruit which the boy was bringing to him.

A particularly mean fellow was this receiver. He knew he had a

young "mug" to deal with, and might have been expected to take some advantage of the fact. The advantage he did take was without precedent for sheer meanness, however. Looking the jewellery over contemptuously, he handed the boy £12—and told him he was lucky to get that. The boy, pocketing the £12, had no reason to think otherwise, and went off back to the country house, perhaps marvelling a little, nevertheless, at the cheap quality of his mistress's trinkets.

The following day, however, he chanced to open a newspaper and found a fresh reference to the burglary, as it was supposed to be. Just a little paragraph saying no clue had been found, though the crime was a week old. But what startled the boy was a reference to the missing jewellery that made the printed words dance before his eyes. For the worth of this jewellery was given as £5,000.

The figure frightened him. The following day he slipped off again to London and made a second call on the little jeweller. He still had the £12 and his simple plan was to buy the jewellery back so that he could return it to the place from which he had stolen it.

The receiver smiled thinly when he heard that £12 offer, and shook his head.

"But," said the boy, "the newspapers say it is worth as much as £5,000."

"So it is," replied the receiver, "but not to you."

The boy was not altogether a fool. "In that case," he returned, "I ought to have more than the beggarly few pounds you gave me. How about it?"

"Not a penny more," replied the receiver. "You took what I offered, and the deal's closed."

"And you won't sell it back to me for what you gave?" persisted the boy.

"I will not," said the receiver. "Why should I be such a fool as to do that?"

The boy did not answer, and left the shop. He saw how he had been swindled, and knew there was nothing he could do about it. But overriding his anger on that particular point was the fright that swept over him again when he pondered on the real value of what he had stolen. He walked the streets and wrestled with his problem for hours. And then, his mind made up, he walked into Scotland Yard and laid bare the whole story.

The Yard detectives got busy right away. They knew the little jeweller all right. They had been trying to get him for years, but he had hitherto always been too smart for them. Even now, though the detectives were certain thousands of pounds' worth of stolen property passed through his hands every year, not the slightest trace of any of it could be found when they searched his premises and arrested him.

But it was his greed that betrayed him. His £12 bargain was still there, in a concealed drawer of his desk. So wonderful a bargain was

it that he had not yet got round to the paramount job of disposing of it. After all, a bargain like that was something to gloat over, and the full savour of it would be gone if these pieces were just broken up or disposed of through his usual channels.

So he had kept it. And his miserliness brought him a nice little penalty of several years' penal servitude.

The queer mentality of the average crook was aptly demonstrated to me some little time ago, when I called on a professional crook whom I wished to ask about his sister, who had just been sentenced for a very cleverly-carried-out series of burglaries in the West End. When he learned I was a crime reporter he gave vent to an indignant snort. "I've been wanting to talk to one of you chaps," he exclaimed. "There's not one of you knows your job."

"How do you mean?" I asked.

"Well," he exclaimed, with an annoyance that was very real, "not one paper has yet said anything about that wonderful set of skeleton keys Nelly had on her when she was arrested. They were the best in London—and I made them. And they don't even get mentioned."

"I just cannot understand the newspapers," he went on with growing indignation. "Why, three weeks ago I got away with jewellery worth about £5,000 from a shop in the West End. It was a good bit of work, and wanted a lot of thinking out. All that job got was a measly twenty lines in one evening newspaper. And yet a week later, when the King's Cross mob broke the window of a jeweller's shop in Camden Town and got away with only £200 worth of watches, they gave that job a full column. I tell you, you newspaper chaps just haven't learned your job."

I managed to mollify him in the end, and he told me his average earnings from crime, one way and another, were about £30 a week. That was not bad. But then he was a man who *had* taken the trouble to learn his job—although that fact did not stop him being finally arrested and sent to Dartmoor.

Crooks, then—and I mean real crooks—have just the same pride of craftsmanship as have folk in honest walks of life. And the same sense of status. A confidence man, for instance, will often refer to some other crook as being merely "a common burglar". Expert mechanics who fashion the tools for front-rank thieves have a profound contempt for the crooks who employ such clumsy methods as jemmies for the breaking open of doors, or for safe-breakers who try to blow open safes with explosive rather than use the beautiful and really fine sets of tools that can be obtained, by those who know where and how.

In just the same way, pickpockets, although they have to spend months in constant practice to perfect their art, are regarded as beneath contempt by the average burglar. And the pickpocket, skilled as he is, will not rub shoulders with the lowly luggage thief. The one type of crook no other crook will tolerate or have anything to do with,

professionally or otherwise, is the blackmailer. On all hands he is regarded with utter loathing.

A Yard man, of course, must know and appreciate all these things. Just as he must know and understand, as soon as he gets into plain-clothes duty, all the mysteries of London's underworld slang. Here are a few of the terms in daily use by London's crooks:

Snout	Stolen cigarettes.
Chin	Razor blade.
Stretch	Twelve months' imprisonment.
Pontoon	Twenty-one months' imprisonment.
A carpet	Three months' imprisonment.
The readers	Newspapers.
The linen draper	"
Up the steps	Sent for trial at the Old Bailey.
A lay down	Remanded in custody.
Kettle	A watch.
Groin	A ring.
On his toes	On the run.
Trotter	Deserter.
Dipper	A pickpocket.
Nark or nose	An informer.
Busy	A uniformed policeman.
Flattie or dick	A detective.
In the sticks	In the suburbs.
Getting the needle	Annoyed.
Spieler	Gambling joint.
Turning over a drum	Searching a thief's house.
Drummer	A spotter of likely houses to rob.
Manor	Police district.
Kipper season	No racing.
Spiv	A layabout or one who gets his living without working.
Grass	Police informer.
Handful	Five years' penal servitude.

It is a strange world, the world in which this is the language spoken. A world which the Yard man must know like a book if he is going to be any good at all at his calling.

And a world stranger by far than anything the fiction-writer could imagine. A world worth walking in, even in the pages of a book, as I hope all my readers will have found.

THE END

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